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**Christian Perspectives on the
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

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How should Christians respond to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which, for decades, has been the focus of media reports on suicide bombings, wars, billions in military weaponry, and countless diplomatic efforts towards resolution by presidents and prime ministers?

A group of Christian leaders met with representative messianic Jews and Christian Palestinians at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, to listen, to learn, and to pray. They asked probing questions about how the scriptures were being interpreted and applied to the conflict.

Then they endeavoured to discern how their churches and institutions might respond with integrity and Christian sensitivity to the present situation. The 'Prague Declaration', which emerged and is to be found in the book, was the fruit that they unanimously affirmed.

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Editorial

From the very early days of the Radical Reformation, from the Anabaptists in various parts of central Europe to the first Baptists coming together in Amsterdam, there has been a strong emphasis on the separation of church and state. Constantly and consistently, Baptists and Anabaptists have argued that the state has no right to intervene in the relationship between the believer gathering with other believers in community and God. In a context where the lines between church and state were often blurred, this was one of the great gifts of the Radical Reformation to the universal church.

However, as that early history also shows and as, for example, John Howard Yoder has persuasively argued more recently, separation of church and state definitely does not imply indifference or self-exclusion. Christian communities are to witness in peace and freedom to the values of the Kingdom of God, embodied in and proclaimed by Jesus Christ, our one Lord and Saviour.

This issue of our journal focuses in different ways on what all this concretely means. Professor Andrea Strübind offers a reading of the relationship between Baptists and Nazi Germany, showing the complexity of trying to retain freedom in a time of unfreedom, and the consequences which that brought. The IBTS Academic Dean, Dr Parush Parushev, presents an introduction to the way in which the Bulgarian people refused to allow the Jews in the country to be deported during the Second World War, and the role of the churches in that refusal. Dr Pavel Hanes, from Slovakia, argues that part of the problem of societies in present-day post-Communist countries (and by extension churches) is that they have not successfully dealt with their Marxist inheritance. Tim Noble offers a response to this paper, drawing on his experiences in Latin America and the Czech Republic.

In very different ways, these papers point both to the challenges of trying to live as church separated from the state, and the ways in which the church can use this 'otherness' as a way to witness to the real presence of the transforming Spirit of God at work in our world.

Tim F T Noble

Course Leader in Mission and Evangelism at IBTS

German Baptists and National Socialism¹

Introduction

‘We Baptists are convinced that the Church of Jesus Christ can never be a tool for nationalistic endeavours without losing her power and denying her mission to the world; that any sort of dependency on the State, which restricts her freedom to exercise love in the world, represents a real danger for the church and reduces her opportunities to carry the gospel to the ends of the world.’² This clear statement on the dangers of nationalism dates from the report of the first commission of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) on ‘Nationalism’ in 1934. It was expressed by Nils Johan Nordström, the Swedish vice-president, at the Fifth Conference of the BWA, not far from Berlin, in the former capital of the Third Reich. Today, after the devastating results of the Second World War and the resulting Cold War, and the demise of the fascist and socialist dictatorships after the Holocaust, we have reason again to ask ourselves what our stance is on nationalism. For the great social changes after the political upheavals of 1989 in Europe have given rise to new conflicts based on national and ethnic chauvinism.

As we turn to the history of the German Baptists under the Third Reich, let us be led by the question of how our congregations sought to retain their identity as Free Churches, in the face of a totalitarian state which made a claim to ideological control over every area of social life.

1. German Baptists in historical context

The history of the German Baptists, which began in the 19th century, cannot be understood without taking note of the particular church-historical and political context of Germany. The decisions of the confessional era, which did not tolerate two or more religions in a particular area because this would endanger internal peace of mind and external political peace, still left their mark in spite of the laws of tolerance.³

¹ A version of this paper first presented at the BWA-Seminar ‘Baptist Identity and National Culture’ in 2001 in Berlin; a detailed analysis of Baptist life under the Nazis is available in Andrea Strübind, *Die unfreie Freikirche: der Bund der Baptistengemeinden im ‘Dritten Reich’*. (2nd edition, corrected and expanded), Wuppertal/Zürich: R. Brockhaus Verlag and Wuppertal/ Kassel: Oncken Verlag, 1995. First edition published in 1991. A version has previously been published in German, *Die deutschen Baptisten und der Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Gemeinde* (ZThG) 7 (2002), pp. 177-194.

² Report from the BWA-Commission on ‘Nationalism’ by N.J. Nordström, in W. Harnisch/P. Schmidt (eds.), *Fünfter Baptisten-Weltkongress* [Fifth Baptist World Congress (Kassel, n.p., 1934), p. 202. (Translation)

³ F. Dickmann, ‘Das Problem der Gleichberechtigung der Konfessionen im Reich im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert’ in H. Lutz (ed.), *Zur Geschichte der Toleranz und Religionsfreiheit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), pp. 232f.

The sovereign had had the right since 1648 to determine the religion of his subjects. This territorial principle, together with the idea of unity of the Faith, which was enforced by state power, remained the dominant paradigm in Germany, and impeded the development of religious pluralism. To this day, the two main churches (Roman Catholic and Lutheran), both of which enjoy state privileges, dominate German society. This fact rests on the basic model of one religion in one territory, in spite of the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion.

Following the second phase of the revival movement the so-called classical Free Churches emerged (Baptists, Methodists, Evangelical Free Churches) in Germany.⁴ The Baptists were confronted from the beginning with state reprisals (seizure, arrest, police interrogation, prohibition of assembly). Ostracised by society, restricted by the State Church and the authorities, the Baptists and other Free Churches demanded state tolerance and civil rights. It was only in the second half of the 19th century that various Free Churches achieved, with difficulty, a certain amount of state recognition, which never reached the status of equality with the two main churches. State toleration was reached by means of their neutral stance in political events such as the revolutionary years around 1848. So as not to endanger their missionary endeavours and the work of the church, they came to the conviction that it was better to keep out of politics.⁵ This must be held as an important hallmark of the German Free Churches, of which the German Baptists are one.

In their struggle for recognition in society, German Baptists thus modified their basic principle of separation of church and state to a requirement of absolute neutrality in political affairs. Regarding western rights of liberty they asked for more tolerance and state connivance in the exercise of their church life. This separation of church and state meant for the Baptists, above all, freedom from state interference in church life, and freedom in their missionary efforts. The positive or pro-church relationship between church and state which existed in the USA was not intended. The possibility of acceptance of social responsibilities, which could be in keeping with the separation of church and state, was never recognised by the German Baptists in the same measure as by the Anglo-American churches. Religious pluralism and secular democracy cannot be seen as founding values of the German Baptists. Moreover, the separation of church and state for Baptists meant a salvation-historical isolation from the

⁴ E. Beyreuther, 'Die Rückwirkung amerikanischer kirchengeschichtlicher Wandlungen auf das evangelische Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert' in E. Beyreuther (ed.), *Frömmigkeit und Theologie* (Hildesheim/New York, G.Olms, 1980), p. 256.

⁵ K.-H. Voigt, Warum kamen Methodisten nach Deutschland? Eine Untersuchung über die Motive für ihre Mission in Deutschland, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-Methodistischen Kirche*, Heft 4, (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1975) pp. 12f.

world. On account of the political and church-political situation they lived first as a defamed sect, then – as a conditionally recognised religious community on the edges of society – as separated in an exclusive sense. It was not renewal of society, but the separation and exodus of the company of true believers, who consistently lived the biblical ideal, that developed into the Free Church ideal. The voluntary, self-financing and self-governing church became thus the basic definition of separation.

Because of the repressive situation, they no longer demanded freedom of faith and conscience as a basic right for everybody. Instead they stood for state tolerance and permission to undertake missionary work for their own denomination. In addition they tried to secure state recognition and a few privileges by means of political neutrality and demonstrative loyalty. That was the situation of the German Free Churches in the early 20th century which, after a short period of democracy, confronted them with the demands of total control under the ideological dictatorships.

2. The unloved republic – the state of affairs after the First World War

On account of their faithfulness to the monarchy, German Baptists had an ambivalent relationship to the Weimar Republic, the first German democracy.⁶ At first they put great hope in the new form of government because, for the first time, the constitution guaranteed the Free Church demand for the separation of church and state. Because the political aims could not be realised, disappointment grew in the Baptist churches. Only a few saw real chances in the democratic form of government. Some of the leaders desired to take on political responsibility through their participation in one of the conservative Christian parties, e.g. in the ‘Christlich-Sozialer Volksdienst’.⁷ This party was a decided opponent of the growing National Socialist movement. In contrast to the political involvement of the few, most Baptists were apolitical. Apolitical behaviour was propagated in Baptist publications and was understood to be a genuine Free Church value. Politics was a private affair and party-political neutrality had to be upheld. The Baptists were – like the two main churches – nothing more than ‘correct partners’ (K. Scholder) of the new government and there remained nothing more than an ineradicable mistrust of the ideologically neutral ‘State without God’.

This accommodation with the interests of the state since its inception, and the difficult acquisition of privileges which safeguarded its

⁶ A. Strübind, *Die unfreie Freikirche, Der Bund der Baptistengemeinden im ‘Dritten Reich’*, (Wuppertal/Zürich: n.p., ²1995), pp. 49ff.

⁷ Strübind, *Freikirche*, pp. 53ff.

being, made their mark on the Baptist Union. Its historical experiences, where political abstinence and demonstrative loyalty to the state were the best guarantees for tolerance from the state, determined its relationship to the changing authorities. Thus they did not recognise the democratic powers as their true partners for achieving their rights. Many joined in the Nazi propaganda's bitter criticism of the Weimar Republic. In summary, one has to come to the conclusion that the German Baptists found greater acceptance for a Christian authoritarian state, which allowed their denominational liberties, than for an ideologically neutral democracy, which guaranteed the separation of church and state.

In addition to the political and economic crises during the last phase of the Weimar Republic, there arose an internal crisis in Baptist circles, in which they deliberated about the identity of the Union and its significance in the changing state of society. The constitution of the Union was reformed along democratic lines. However, this was felt by many church members to be too formal and paralysing. Like many other Germans, Baptists held the danger of a communist takeover for real. The oppressive communist rule in the USSR was perceived as the real threat. Baptist anticommunism was strengthened through the close links with the Russian churches in the Soviet Union which had to endure state repression.

At the end of the Weimar Republic the German Baptists had found no uniform position in the debate about National Socialism. The opinions ranged from sharp rejection to active membership in the NSDAP. The escalating struggle between the antagonising political movements also manifested itself in the churches. This brought the leaders of the Union to issue a warning to the churches, to prevent every sort of agitation for a political party or wearing of party badges and greetings with party slogans. The political neutrality of the churches was emphasised. In addition there arose an apocalyptic interpretation of the turbulent events. The majority of Baptists were, from the outset, politically disinterested. They wanted the church to remain a quiet island of peace in the middle of political debate.

3. The first years of the Nazi Dictatorship

In the first year after the so-called seizure of power, on the 30th January 1933, Hitler and his party succeeded, within a few months, in destroying the whole system of law and order in Germany. Through the forcing of everyone into line ('Gleichschaltung'), the jurisdiction of the State Parliaments was withdrawn, the existing parties were dissolved, and all other democratic institutions, such as the trades unions, were destroyed. The administration of justice was robbed of its democratic foundations. Authority for the jurisdiction came from popular sentiment

(‘Volksempfinden’) and Nazi ideology. A hierarchically organised One Party Dictatorship under the Fuehrer Adolf Hitler arose, which was empowered with all the powers of the state. These were specifically implemented against political and ideological opponents. This so-called ‘national revolution’ was greeted and supported by the vast majority of the German people. I do not wish to go into the grounds for this enthusiastic assent and refer the reader to the relevant literature. It is important to understand the huge dynamic of this political upheaval, which was understood by Christians as a God-given turn of events. German Baptists were also carried along by a wave of enthusiasm for the new leadership. After the decisive parliamentary vote of 5th March 1933 this was regarded as the legitimate government, which according to Rom. 13 was to be owed obedience.

From the beginning, however, Baptists saw their organisational continuity, and later on the very existence of the Union, as endangered by the totalitarian state. This insecurity was a result of the self-contradictory church politics of the Nazi leadership. Hitler looked on the churches only as a factor for promulgating or for hindering his scheme for unifying the nation. The party political programme of the NSDAP contained, tactically, an ambivalent and enigmatic confession to ‘positive Christianity’, which many Christians interpreted as genuine openness for Christian values.

The Nazi leadership’s aim was to force the two main churches into complete conformity. Where the Catholic Church had been seemingly integrated into the revolutionary state through the conclusion of the Reich Concordat in July 1933 and the accompanying destruction of political Catholicism, the twenty-eight protestant state churches (*Landeskirchen*) were to be brought together in a process of ideological conquest from the inside to a unified, centrally led Reichs-church under the leadership of a single bishop. In order to secure total power, Hitler was at first ready to enter into a tactical rapprochement with the churches, which required a positive attitude on the part of the churches to the Nazi regime.

After the controversial election of the Reichsbishop the struggle between church and state flared up. This was the birth of the Confessional Church (*Bekennende Kirche*), among whose number were counted the famous theologians Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. What stance did the German Baptists take? While the two main churches were negotiating with the state authorities in 1933, during which the building of the protestant Reichschurch was begun, and the place of the Catholic Church was established by the Reichs Concordat, the Free Churches found themselves in a difficult situation. Through the nationalist faith movement of German Christians the idea of the dissolution of the Free Churches and

their integration into the protestant Reichschurch was propagated. Simultaneously the worry arose in Baptist circles that they could be accused of being not of German but of foreign origin and could meet with difficulties because of their international links. It was demanded in public lectures that the Baptists, together with all the other sects, should no longer belong in Germany but in Africa.⁸ It did not stop with this demand. In the process of church reform in the Rhein area and in Westphalia some Baptist churches were actually disbanded and integrated into the protestant Lutheran church.

The leaders of the Baptist Union drew two organisational consequences from this. In order to avoid being forcibly integrated into the Lutheran Reichs church, they sought to merge with other Free Churches to form a German Free Church, which should exist alongside the other two main churches. In addition to this, they undertook to reorganise the Union according to the example of the state on a hierarchical and centralist basis through the introduction of the Fuehrer principle. These two strategies were determined by 1933 and were formed by disputes of areas of responsibility in positions in the state and the churches, whose responsibility for the Free Churches had not been made clear.

This restructuring of a congregationalist union of independent churches, whose highest body was an administration elected by Union delegates, into a hierarchically organised Church under the authoritarian leadership of a Union Fuehrer was like the squaring of a circle. Nevertheless, the church delegates at the Union Conference of 1933 agreed to the introduction of the Fuehrer principle, but only after heated discussion and on account of the special political circumstances. The only concession to the objections of the delegates was the election of three instead of one Union Fuehrer. The rigorous attempt of these three to enforce the Fuehrer principle at a regional and congregational level led to open resistance in local churches. People held free meetings in order to protest against authoritarian Union leadership. The churches did not tolerate the Union making up their minds for them – they regarded this as breaking with Free Church tradition. One of these meetings took place in the town of Wuppertal-Barmen, which was so important for the German Church struggle, and where the first synod of the Confessional Church would take place one year later. The Fuehrer principle failed in the first months to gain a foothold in the Baptist Union and was unable to be enforced. As Union Congresses only took place every three years it could first be removed from the statute in 1936.

⁸ Strübind, *Freikirche*, p. 94.

At the end of 1933 the German Free Churches were assured by the Lutheran churches that they would not be integrated into the German protestant Reichschurch. After this assurance came, the plan for building a unified German Free Church was immediately discarded. The attempts to unify the Free Churches entered into a new phase in 1937, as the anti-church line of the Nazi regime and its rigid line against the sects became more obvious, resulting in the banning of smaller religious organisations. At the end of 1933, after a period of infighting within the church and church political anxieties, the Baptists had moved themselves through to a position of absolute affirmation of the state, shown in their publications and in their strict obedience to every order from the state. The then General Secretary of the BWA, James Henry Rushbrooke, reported on his homecoming from a visit to Germany: '... the overwhelming majority of German Baptists welcome the Nazi Government with the Chancellorship of Herr Hitler, chiefly on the ground that it has averted the peril of atheist-communist domination'.

A painful intervention by the Nazi State hit the youth work of the German Baptists in February 1934. The enforced integration of the protestant youth organisation into the national socialist youth organisation through the contract between the Reichsbishop and the leader of the Hitler Youth, Baldur von Schirach, had indirect consequences for Baptist youth work. In order to avoid being forced to conform, and therefore delivering their own youth into the Hitler Youth movement, the Youth Union dissolved itself, and youth work became the responsibility of the local church. This was closely observed by the State so that the latter could be certain that it was just a matter of purely religious activities, so that there would be no competition alongside the Nazi youth organisations. At this time the Nazi State had no interest in the Free Churches, so their Christian work and mission could continue unhindered. This situation first changed when their propaganda potential with regard to the international Baptist community was discovered and was used as a tool against the protestant Lutheran church which was struggling for its independence.

1934 was marked by the struggle of the Lutheran Churches to retain their independence from the totalitarian state. Although there was a measure of sympathy in the Baptist churches for the Confessional Church, the Union leadership distanced itself officially from the struggle and obliged the local churches to take a neutral course of action. The earlier problematic relationship between the Lutheran State Church and the Free Churches hindered their alliance in the face of the Nazi regime. The struggle between church and state was perceived by the Baptists to be a chance to remain untouched. But from the Confessional Church side there was no signal of readiness to hold talks or of cooperation. The deliberate

decision by the Confessional Church to assume a 'volkskirchliche' structure led to the Free Churches turning away disappointed, emphasising their own neutrality in the struggle between church and state and establishing, in a self-sufficient manner, that they had managed to avoid a similar crisis. The neutral course with regard to the struggle between church and state was maintained from 1934 up until the serious turn of events at the World Council of Churches in Oxford in 1937, at which Free Church representatives distanced themselves publicly from the Confessional Church.

The visitation by state representatives to the celebrations of 100 years of continental Baptist churches brought Baptists into the media limelight for the first time. In contrast to the protestant Lutheran churches which were at that time part of the struggle between church and state, the Baptists were distinguished by the Nazi rulers as being an exemplary religious grouping. This hitherto unknown esteem by the state led to the churches' strong approval of the Nazi regime.

The planning, inviting and carrying through of the BWA Congress in Berlin in 1934 was also in the context of their being used by the state. In the spring of 1933, German Baptists had originally cancelled the congress so as not to endanger the integration of the churches into the new national state through their obvious links with churches abroad. Then pressure from the German government offices resulted in the Congress being re-invited, promoted and used as a propaganda measure against the sceptics abroad. From the outset German Baptists found themselves in conflict between state and denominational interests. The unclear legal situation of the Baptists in the Third Reich and the attempt to secure the existence of the Baptist Union strengthened their readiness to conform to the conditions and demands of the state. At the same time, the congress put the German Baptists through a severe test, as the sister churches abroad were thoroughly critical of the Nazi-State, above all with regard to its race ideology. Those with responsibility in the German Union guaranteed to the state authorities the politically harmless nature of events at the congress, although the main topics: Racism, Nationalism, and the Question of Peace were all potentially explosive. From the beginning, German Baptists found themselves on the defensive, which was expressed in oaths of loyalty to the Nazi state. Nevertheless the BWA Congress was an extraordinary event, in which, perhaps for the last time during the Third Reich, the dangers of nationalism, racism and militarism were spoken of in front of an international body without intervention from the state.

A commission of the BWA had been tackling the theme of nationalism since 1931. It became convinced that nationalism was one of

the main causes of war, which was the reason that the churches had no right to remain passive and neutral in the face of chauvinist nationalism. The nationalist postulate, that the state had an absolute and unrestricted claim to power, was condemned because it inevitably led to the loss of freedom among the population and to enmity among the peoples. These remarks hit at the heart of the Nazi ideology of the state. The resolutions of the Congress expressed significant verdicts against nationalism, but also against racism and anti-Semitism. The BWA Congress took a clear position against all forms of racial discrimination in the very capital of the country which had created a special jurisdiction for its Jewish citizens, in which these were defamed, deprived of their rights and persecuted. The German Baptists felt themselves called to defend Nazi politics, but also supported the clear resolutions on all topics.

During the visit of a high-ranking delegation of the BWA to the Reichsbishop, the Baptists received written assurance that they would not be forcefully included in the Reichschurch, which was then coming into being. The BWA Congress was celebrated by the state as a great propaganda success. The public interest in the event and the resulting echo in the press led to Baptists gaining a lot of prestige. In Nazi publications the Baptists were even portrayed as being an exemplary religious body and were recommended to the two main churches as worthy of emulation. One important aim had been achieved through the intervention of the numerically imposing sister churches: the free existence of the Baptists.

4. The sobering years (1936/37) until the outbreak of the Second World War

During the first two years of the dictatorship, which was a time of toleration, the Union of Baptist Churches was unsuccessful in securing its legal position throughout the land as a public body or corporation in spite of many negotiations, in contrast to other Free Churches. From the beginning of 1935 the state began to use systematic surveillance measures leading to the banning of some smaller religious bodies. Through the levying of members' lists, the political thinking of the group was evaluated, whereby neutrality and political abstinence counted as negative criteria. This judgement seems unusual, but is typical of an ideological dictatorship: the conscious apolitical nature of a church is not appreciated but is criticised as an immunising strategy against the ideological saturation of society.

Baptists took a hard, critical stance against the nationalistic-racist movement ('völkische Bewegung') which a state propaganda wave had started in 1935. The Baptist Church proved to be quite resistant to this new

pagan thought, failing to recognise the close connection between the Nazi Leadership and the national movement's ('völkische') ideology. The open enmity against Christianity, which appeared first in the ideological struggle in 1935, the police interference in Baptist missionary work and the state surveillance measures led to a basic rethinking about the way ahead for German Baptists. The arrest of a well-known preacher and leader in the Union because of his critical remarks about the nationalistic ideology triggered a recommendation to the churches that they pull out of the public debate. The churches were to hold themselves apart from any dispute about state ideology. This retreat into inwardness, together with political good behaviour, characterised the route taken by German Baptists until the end of the war. Toleration of the Baptist missionary work enabled an arrangement with the Nazi State, whose anti-church character and totalitarian claim to power were increasingly recognised. Speculations about the last days were an escape route for many Baptists for survival in these critical days.

1937 saw the climax of the ban on the sects. The anti-church faction in the NSDAP, which aimed at decentralising and finally liquidating the churches, won increasing amounts of power. As a result of this dangerous development for the Free Churches, the thought of unifying the German Free Churches re-surfaced. The Free Churches, through merging, desired to gain more relevance *vis-à-vis* the totalitarian state. Attempts to merge the Free Churches ran into great difficulties in the coming years. In the middle of the negotiations came the surprising news of the banning of the Brethren churches. They were later authorised to constitute themselves as the Union of Free Brethren Churches, under strict conditions imposed by the state authorities, of which demonstrative loyalty to National Socialism was one. In my opinion, this was a singular event in the sect politics of the Nazis. In the following years Baptists embraced religious groups which were about to be banned, in order to bolster their own numbers and to support their own existence. At the same time Baptists sought to secure the standing of the Baptist churches through demonstrative loyalty to the state and through good contacts with various state authorities, above all with the Reich's ministry of churches. Basic loyalty to the state was not in question. In addition came the apolitical stance in the churches with simultaneous concentration on missionary work which was tolerated by the state.

5. The relationship to Jewish policy

One can only speak about a discussion in the Baptist churches about the Jewish question during the first phase of the Nazi dictatorship, as publications from 1933 show. In the face of state persecution of the Jewish

population, Baptists behaved passively throughout. Given the small number of Jewish members in Baptist churches, Baptists dispensed with a general ruling. The so-called 'non-Aryan Laws' were not put into practice in the churches, thus Jewish members were not removed from membership and, in the case of their moving house, they were admitted into membership of the church. Nevertheless, Jewish members had to endure a certain amount of discrimination in the churches. Assistance from a few individuals contrasted with the isolationist policy which the majority of church members pursued.

Looking back, it is particularly shameful that on the night of the Reich's pogrom in November 1938 the German Union looked into the possibility of buying up synagogues cheaply. After the pogrom the Union was advised against buying synagogues because former Jewish prayer houses, which had been bought up by the Baptists, had already been demolished and burnt down. Attempts were made to reduce the material losses for the Baptist churches by suing for repayment of the purchase price! The last phase of the persecution of the Jews was clothed in silence by the Baptists. Some individuals gave their help to the conquered regions in the east and tried to reduce the great suffering.

6. The Second World War and the Consequences for the post-war Period

Hitler's expansion policies and his successes in foreign policy, such as the annexation of Austria, were joyfully greeted by the Baptists as by the vast majority of the German population. They saw the chance to reach new mission fields. This mission-oriented commentary developed into a stereotyped reception of the foreign successes of the Nazi state. At the outbreak of the Second World War loyalty to the fatherland was considered by the Baptist churches to be an undisputed duty, to be taken for granted. To this day there is only one known case of refusal to undertake military service by a Baptist. Alfred Herbst, a member of Stuttgart Baptist Church, became a conscientious objector and was hanged in 1943 for subversion of the armed forces.

The anti-church methods of the Nazi rulers, which came under the cloak of 'war-necessities', interfered massively in church affairs, and led to renewed negotiations about a merger of the Free Churches. In Autumn 1940 they expected a decisive turn of events in favour of Germany and desired to ward off an enforced reorganisation of the churches after the war through their own initiative. Thus the leading bodies of the Baptist and Brethren churches forced a speedy merger, which was adopted in February of 1941, but was sanctioned by the state, after a painful period of waiting,

in October 1942. That this was in no way an intentional ecumenical consensus but was rather a contemporarily motivated emergency fellowship is shown by the actual development in the post-war period. The organisational merger of the two rather different Free Churches gave the name which is still in use: 'Union of Evangelical Free Churches' (BEFG). The neutral name of the denomination was intentional – they wanted to remain open for the entry of further Free Churches.

The ongoing course of the war brought more serious state reprisals which strengthened anxieties about the existence of the church. In addition there arose grave material losses. The preachers' seminary in Hamburg, the Union Headquarters, and several church buildings were destroyed. Half of the preachers had been called up. From 1943 the coming defeat was ever more recognised by the leadership in the Union and they began to take preventive measures for the post-war period. In spite of this assessment, the Free Churches sent a congratulatory telegram to prove their unbroken loyalty to the Fuehrer after the failed attempt on his life on 20th July 1944.

The Second World War brought great losses for the new Church Union. Around 145 churches with 407 branch churches were lost through the transfer of the German territories in the east. A third of the members had become refugees. Almost all the important institutions of the Union were destroyed or extensively damaged. In the post-war period the traditional tendency to separate from the state and to concentrate on missionary work continued. The theologically legitimised distance between the churches and society was even greater in terms of political and ethical responsibility.

7. Summary and Evaluation

1. During the Nazi period the separation principle was increasingly given up on tactical grounds by the leaders of the Union of Baptist Churches. This strategy even led to a temporary assumption of state forms for the organisation of the churches, as the imposition of the Fuehrer principle on the Union of 1933-36 shows. The ubiquitous influence of the totalitarian state on the decision-making of the churches and the Union can be continually proven from the sources. Even if Baptists in the early period of the Nazi dictatorship were seen as a welcome propaganda tool for foreign purposes and on occasion in the framework of church-state policies as a means of discrimination in the struggle against the Confessional Church, the participants could be in no doubt about the fact that this privileged treatment would only be temporary.
2. The Baptist decision-makers developed a policy of diplomatic manoeuvring with the state authorities in order not to endanger the life

of the churches with the background of the very repressive policy on sects of the Nazi state after 1937. Due to fears about their existence, and in order to meet the ever-present threat of a ban, the representatives of the Union accommodated themselves readily to the state demands. As a result, Baptists concentrated, almost exclusively, during the Nazi period on their missionary work and the strengthening of the churches. In this the traditional interpretation of separation of church and state was modified to being consistently apolitical. In the shadow of the great ecclesiastical struggles, German Baptists tried to stabilise their legal status and, as far as possible, maintain their autonomy.

3. In the struggle to survive, the situation between the churches was characterised by animosity, difference and prejudice. In face of the German Church struggle they behaved neutrally or distanced themselves publicly from the Confessional Church, as happened at the World Council of Churches Conference in Oxford in 1937. The Baptists' leading body even accepted the resulting ecumenical isolation in order to keep intact their institutional and organisational status. The extreme situation as a minority and being conscious of their numerical meaninglessness led, on the other hand, in the various phases of the Third Reich, to an intensive search for a merging of all the German Free Churches, so as to gain at least some relevance in the eyes of the totalitarian state. Out of these fears for their existence and from their continual acceptance of the demands of the state, the Free Churches became a stabilising factor in the Nazi dictatorship.
4. The consistent realisation of the separation of church and state would have inevitably brought Baptists into conflict with the total demands of the state. They affirmed as ever the principle of separation of state and church, but understood this in the sense of the state being a law unto itself. The thesis that Christianity and Politics were incompatible, which had been put forward in the 19th century and which had become axiomatic in the Free Churches in the Weimar Republic in the area of social ethics, was confirmed in the Nazi period. In particular, the political neutrality of the Free Churches was repeatedly given prominence, even to the extent of a distancing from the politicisation of the two main churches who found themselves in the struggle between church and state. They emphasised their own neutrality, and proved themselves to be extremely agile in their doings with the state authorities. The concentration on their own church interests and the hard fight for the institutional existence of their respective Free Churches were, for those responsible, the most important motives for toeing the Nazi line.

5. After this general summary, what were the reasons for the principle of political neutrality and the meagre resistance to the Third Reich? We follow the thesis that theological and traditional prerequisites hindered a consistent Free Church stance against the totalitarian state.
6. The Free Church teaching on the authorities, as this is taught in the Anglo-Saxon Free Churches, denies the state any kind of religious significance. This a-religious interpretation of the state marks the difference from the theological interpretation of the state in the Lutheran teaching on the two realms of government. With regard to social and ethical conceptions, German Baptists took their lead more unconsciously than with the critical reflection of the greater blueprints of Lutheran theology. Above all, they took on the new interpretation of the Lutheran teaching on the two realms of government.⁹ The Baptists and the other Free Churches took on the demand of separation of church and state as their inheritance from the Anglo-Saxon Free Churches, but also linked this demand with a dualist acceptance of the teaching on the two realms of government which, during the Third Reich, was able to lead to a religious enhancement of the totalitarian state as a God-given providence.
7. The roots of German Baptists in the revivalist movement was the main reason for their understanding that the separation of church and state meant the incompatibility of Christianity and politics. According to this view the church and the world are completely divorced from one another, so that the state can be permitted to assume power as she likes. Thus in the Third Reich they continually emphasised their political neutrality. H.J. Goertz has correctly established that this Free Church neutrality in the face of the ideologically totalitarian state obliged them to non-interference and 'bound the churches therefore to a political agreement', thus abandoning their nonconformist freedom.¹⁰ This policy of neutrality did not prevent the Baptists from expressing their loyalty to the state and, for example, supporting the home and foreign policies of the Nazi government in their publications. When the issue was opposition to the state (e.g. in the struggle between church and state) they declared their neutrality to be their official Free Church position. In other cases they expressed themselves clearly, politically, when the issue was tactical loyalty, greetings or even propaganda support for the Nazi state in the local churches.
8. A further inheritance from the revival movement was shown in the missionary direction of German Baptists. Even under the conditions of

⁹ Strübind, *Freikirche*, p. 43.

¹⁰ H.-J. Goertz, 'Die kleinen Chancen der Freiheit. Überlegungen zur Reform der Freikirchen', *ÖR* 31 (1982), p.186.

the Nazi dictatorship in wartime they developed a lively and committed evangelistic work. The church structure and the missionary activity of the Baptists concentrated on the individual and aimed at his or her conversion, personal experience of faith and internal spiritual growth based on Holy Scripture. Missions were and are often the only intentional and theologically legitimised form of influencing society. The missionary work which the Nazi state tolerated and supported became, thus, the decisive criterion for judging the regime. A state which did not hinder this form of Baptist missionary work, which was its most important commission, was judged positively in spite of the obviously deplorable state of affairs.

9. The devoutness of the German Baptists was marked by an individualist tendency to deny the world, which obscured the universal claim to the power of God over his creation. The confession of the personal Lord and Saviour displaced the confession of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the World, who alone has power over the rulers and the authorities.¹¹
10. The demand for separation of church and state, which we Baptists hold to be our Free Church inheritance, was originally linked to the demand for freedom of belief and freedom of conscience for everybody. Baptists need to pursue these freedoms in every political system, otherwise they lose an element of their theological identity. The silence and the passivity of the Baptists in view of the persecution of Jewish citizens and those with other opinions during the Nazi period revealed their failing in this indispensable role as champion of the disadvantaged.
11. As Baptists we believe that God makes history in this world until the end of the world. This eschatological understanding of history was and is consensus in our churches. The salvation history perspective was a reason for tolerating the violent state rule of the Nazis, maintaining this to be a fixed part of God's plan of salvation. The persecution of the Jews was interpreted by many of the believers in a historical salvation manner. The apocalyptic interpretation of history was able to theologically legitimise the complete retreat into the church, the full abstinence from political activities and silence over the injustices of the regime. This thoughtless theological interpretation was also able to contribute to the elevation and glorification of the Fuehrer state.
12. A further important traditional factor is biblicism which belongs to the fundamentals of Baptist ecclesiology. From the very beginning Baptists

¹¹ Günter Balders, 'Kurze Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten' in G. Balders (ed.), *Ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe. Festschrift 150 Jahre Baptistengemeinden in Deutschland* (Wuppertal/Kassel: Oncken, ³1989), p. 123.

confessed Holy Writ as the only authority in matters of dogma and questions of the life of faith, rejecting binding confessional writings. The evaluation of the state authorities was thus always a question of obedience to scripture. This scriptural principle which originated in the Reformed inheritance could lead to a formalised use and the emphasis of single proof texts, as the exclusive use of Rom. 13 during the Nazi period shows. These biblicist blinkers had wide-reaching consequences for the question of resistance on Christian grounds, which was not permitted by the leadership on account of Rom. 13. Obedience to the state authorities was upheld even after the anti-Christian character of the regime had become terribly evident. Political indifference to the political systems and individual passivity were thus biblically legitimised.

13. In my study of the Union of Baptist Churches in the Third Reich the significance of freedom for the Free Churches as decisive for their relationship to the respective state form and for their identity was worked out. I took this basic idea from Keith Clements' valuable study on the English Baptists and the German Church struggle.¹² The German Baptists and the other Free Churches held themselves to be free, as long as the state did not hinder them from carrying out their missionary activities. They fought for their institutional freedom. For this they were prepared to enter into many compromises with the Nazi State, do away with fundamental convictions and correct basic teachings. The protection of their external form of existence and the survival of the local churches were perceived to be the highest aims. Only a few recognised that the giving up of institutional liberty would have revealed the true freedom of the Free Church. This true freedom of the Free Church shows itself in the preaching of the gospel to everybody, in the proving of the message of reconciliation and service to neighbours of whatever origin, religion or skin colour, in the fight for the freedom of others and in clear protest against injustice in every state.

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¹² K.W. Clements, 'A Question of Freedom? British Baptists and the German Church Struggle', in K.W. Clements (ed.), *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1982), pp. 96-113.

Residual Marxism or The Need for Demarxification in Eastern Europe

In the beginning there was Marx

The heritage left behind by the Communist attempt to change the world is manifold and varied. Perhaps the most conspicuous is the backward economy and, in some places, devastated countryside. But there is a more dangerous part to this inheritance, namely, that which has been left in people's *minds* – Marxism, its official ideology. This Soviet version of the philosophical-economic-political theory was more precisely called Marxism-Leninism¹ and during the times when the bright Communist future was being built the whole population was systematically indoctrinated with it. After the Communist system fell, no-one attempted to carry out any kind of general 'demarxification' – understandably because a democratic system expects/assumes that everyone chooses his/her worldview freely and is not forced into it by official propaganda. Consequently, since this assumption of freedom of choice was present in the creation of a new democracy, there was no effort made to replace a Marxist worldview and something was left in the minds of people that we can call *residual Marxism*. Not to take it seriously is to forget that the attraction/appeal of Marxist theory grows in direct proportion to the temporal or geographic distance of its practice.

Demarxification is necessary but difficult because it demands unravelling the Marxist system in which threads of science, religion, politics and ethics are confusingly intertwined. A full critique of Marxism is therefore possible only from the position of a fully developed worldview and this is not fashionable in these postmodern times. My contribution to 'demarxification' is given neither from a standpoint of religion (against atheism) nor of science (against the cosmological, sociological, economic or other Marxist theories) but is limited to a discussion of political and ethical attitudes lingering here as *residual Marxism*.

Marxism has given philosophical and ethical dignity and supposedly scientific validity to the vices and attitudes present in some measure in every human being. These need to be called by their right names and sent where they belong – among the unethical and unsound human characteristics of which people are (normally) ashamed. 'Democracy and

¹ The original version had been mixed by Marx and Engels; Lenin applied it after modifying it in Russia, and Stalin, after further processing, enforced it in Eastern Europe.

development are moral goals. They impose a new morality necessary to their achievement.’²

Residual Marxism that is torpedoing the attempt to rebuild Eastern European society can be seen mainly in three ideas. First, in the easily comprehensible Marxist ideology. It is difficult to replace a simple worldview with a more complicated one. Secondly, in revengeful indignation caused by exploitation of humanity by humanity. For a Marxist the enmity between classes is eternal. Thirdly, in the absolute authority of scientifically discovered truth. Only Marxism is considered to be a scientific explanation of the laws of social evolution.

Marxist ideology was easy to understand

The first thing to be stressed and realised is that Marxism is not only an economic theory or a theory of social evolution. It is a complete worldview, a philosophical system answering every question under and above the sun. Marx was one of the last philosophers who attempted to show how all things in the universe relate to each other. The philosophy bearing his name is a systematic arrangement of all human knowledge, a mental framework in which all important questions are or can be answered: the (non-)existence of God, the laws of nature, social change or a teleology of world history. ‘Only Marxists tried thoroughly to integrate into one theoretical construction all economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of the capitalist phenomenon.’³

Such a comprehensive worldview inevitably has the attributes of a religion. Marx was persuaded that an atheistic state built according to his philosophy would be a perfect realisation of the essence of Christianity. (He insisted that ‘the perfect Christian state is an atheistic state’.⁴) Later, mainly Russian Marxists viewed Marxism in this way and tried to make of it a new religion. It was Lenin who strictly rejected all such efforts. In spite of all this, Marxism effected such a transcendent assurance of faith, and even leader-worship that in the psychology of zealous Marxists it became a substitute for religion.

It is not difficult to deduce from this that Marxism has left behind an empty space, a worldview-vacuum of religious dimensions, and that a full critique of Marxism (‘demarxification’) cannot avoid discussion of religion. A serious problem to be considered is, which religion is going to

² M. Novak, *Will it Liberate? Questions about Liberation Theology* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 83.

³ P.L. Berger, *Kapitalistická revoluce* (Bratislava: Archa, 1993), p. 7.

⁴ K. Marx, *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/index.htm, 16 June 2002).

replace Marxism. The only one that can answer Marxism exhaustively is Christianity because in doing this Christianity responds to its Marxist (mis)interpretation. This should be a challenge for Christians to point out the deformities of Christianity in the residual Marxism around us.

Marxism is not only an all-encompassing philosophy, but also has very attractive simplifications. All philosophy is simply divided into idealism and materialism. Idealism is given such attributes as uncritical, subjective, abstract, fideistic, mystical, fantastic, whimsical, blinded etc. Materialism is, on the contrary, scientific, progressive, realistic, objective, critical, dialectical or historical. The picture is very simple indeed. Who would desire to be called an idealist after hearing this description? This kind of thinking led to a black-and-white division of people into progressives and obscurantists. Although the obscurantists might mean well, objectively they were supporting regression. If democracy is, as they say, an art of compromise, this kind of black-and-white division of people is fatal. Demarxification means convincing those with residual Marxism in their minds that reality is not black-and-white and an opposite view is always worth attention.

A very suitable supplement to this black-and-white division of philosophy is the Marxist doctrine of the dialectical understanding of truth. Eternal truth does not exist (except perhaps, says Engels, in the sciences) but Marxist dialectics is a tool that can bring absolute and relative truth together in such a way, that 'absolute truth is composed of relative truths'.⁵ In this way the dialectical method taken from the philosophy of Hegel becomes a useful tool for including contradictory statements (thesis and antithesis) in one system (synthesis). Marx's political analysis was always adapted to historical reality. In spite of the most flagrant contradictions (which he simply brushed away using ad hoc explanations) the theory remained valid as the central article of faith that cannot be doubted. Also, according to Lenin, one of the basic principles of dialectics is that there is no abstract truth – truth is always concrete. With a religious zeal, a Marxist may insist that he knows the absolute truth but he can change his view if it is proved to be 'dogmatic' (a Marxist term of abuse) or 'subjective' (a synonym for a lie). Only dialectical materialism is able to infallibly divide truth into a subjective and an objective kind. The truth value of each proposition is decided according to its source – if the idea is of 'bourgeois' origin by that same fact it has been proven as 'untrue'. P. Ricoeur very fittingly labelled Marx as one of the three 'masters of suspicion' (Nietzsche and Freud are the other two). Every proposition must be explained by class

⁵ F.V. Konstantinov, ed., *Základy marxistickej filozofie* (Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1961), p. 327.

interest, but only the class interest of the Marxists is objective.⁶ For this kind of thinking the key task is to separate what you see and feel from what is officially (by class) accepted as the explanation. The world of *experience* is completely overshadowed by the word of *explanations*. Residual Marxism is still making its victims easy prey to clever propaganda *despite experience*. Demarxification must, therefore, consist in patient building of people's abilities to decide what is truth, not by party ideology or by the origin, but by critically assessed experience.

The peak of Marxist simplifications is the way it explains everything on the basis of economic relations. 'The final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch.'⁷ Here Marxism is using the *theory of reflection* according to which 'the spiritual life of a society is the reflection of objective reality' (Stalin).⁸ The so-called 'economic base' decides what the superstructure will be like (culture, morality and religion). That is why the economic reality is more fundamental than the power of politics, ethics or culture. Philosophically and psychologically, Marx's word *alienation* (taken from Hegel) is a very attractive term. Through this word Marxism becomes a tool for removing all problems of humankind. The alienation of the person is created through the selling of their labour-power, because in this way '(I convert) my person into the property of another'.⁹ The same thing happens in the division of labour or in the production of a commodity. This is why 'in the higher stage of communism, commodity production will naturally cease'.¹⁰ Alienation will be removed through the change of economic relations that create it in the first place – e.g. through removal of 'the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour'¹¹ but mainly by the abolition of private property, which in Marxism is a sort of original sin. 'When the means of production belong to the working people and the exploiting classes have

⁶ Marxist suspicion showed itself in a most conspicuous way in the Stalinist elimination of political opposition before it could sprout. It was a kind of *social prevention* to prevent *possible* counter-revolutionary action. Solzhenitsyn gives evidence that for the communist system it was not personal guilt that was essential but the appearance of social threat.

⁷ F. Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch03.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁸ The quotation is from Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Marxism*. The text can be found at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>.

⁹ K. Marx, *Capital I* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch06.htm, 29 Oct. 2002).

¹⁰ Collective (editor not given), *Politická ekonómia* [Political Economy] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1963), p. 559.

¹¹ K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm, 2 June 2001).

been liquidated, the objectively conditioned aim of production is constant growth of the living standards of all members of socialist society.'¹²

The result of this unlimited trust in the almighty economy was an impoverishment of the inner life,¹³ popular anti-intellectualism and contempt for culture.¹⁴ After the Communist takeover these primitivist theories were not confirmed in practice, so a great explanation concerning *why* began. Former Marxist L. Kolakowski has noted in various places that lying is the immortal soul of Communism. The freedom of conscience proclaimed by Lenin meant, in reality, persecution of believers. The rights of citizens, guaranteed by the Constitution, were routinely violated by 'class interpretations'. Grand proclamations about the progress and success of Marxist leadership were being proclaimed vis-a-vis the grey and often bleak reality, although Marxists often took credit for the things they had nothing to do with (as if they had invented natural laws or created human inventiveness and industry). Paradoxically, people who lived under Marxist propaganda have learned to distrust politicians but simultaneously they are ready to believe even the most glaring lie if it is simple and insidious enough.

Marxist simplifications, right from the beginning, took the form of slogans. The Communist Manifesto declared that '...the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property'.¹⁵ The simple equation of Lenin is well known: 'communism = soviet power + electrification of the whole country'.¹⁶ Solzhenitsyn wrote about Lenin: 'Whenever he was thinking about a problem, ready-made slogans came into being – and the final reason for such thinking was exactly in the formulation of a slogan for the moment'.¹⁷

Under Communism the whole country was infested with slogans. There are few who want them back but their marvellous simplicity has not lost its attractiveness and that can be seen in the success of politicians who do not argue – just proclaim their truth. Demarxification cannot consist in new non-Marxist or even anti-Marxist slogans – these would only strengthen these attitudes in residual Marxism. Honouring reality means that people have to come to terms with the fact that reality is complex and to know this means to study it patiently.

¹² Collective: *Politická ekonómia*, p. 493.

¹³ 'The socialist hero of work was characterised by a poverty of interior life'. J. Tischner, *Marxism and Christianity* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1987), p. 64.

¹⁴ 'Lenin is a passionate hater of educated people and this enmity has been imparted to all of his movement'. V. Liberda, *Otec totalitarismu* [The Father of Totalitarianism] (Opava: Optys, 1992), p. 85.

¹⁵ K. Marx, F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985), p. 28.

¹⁶ Collective: *Politická ekonómia*, p. 730.

¹⁷ Solzhenitsyn: *Lenin v Curychu* [Lenin in Zurich] (Praha: Academia, 2000), p. 23.

Revengeful indignation over exploitation

Marxism has combined in itself some of the most powerful forces of human emotions: the power of compassion for sufferers, the desire for revenge for injustices against the defenceless and the power of envying the rich and wealthy. Through its concern for the fate of the poor and its programme of radical improvement, this atheistic system has won the hearts of many Christians (think of Liberation Theology!). Through its promise of revenge it has mobilised an army of the robbed and disinherited. The Communist Manifesto declares: 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.' Marxism is therefore not only a simple explanation of the world – it is at the same time a programme of how to build a just world.

Marxist expressions about the greatness of the human person and his or her misery are very impressive. Says Marx: '...man is the highest essence for man' ... it is 'a categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable...'.¹⁸ And again Marx: 'Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.'¹⁹ The Marxist state tried to rid society of the most glaring poverty. The beggars could not sit in the streets, everyone had to be employed and medical care was provided for everyone. To what measure it was an expression of compassion is doubtful. In Bolshevik Russia the workers were called *rabsila* (abbreviation for working power) and farmers were called *muzickoje syrio* (peasant raw material). Gorkij observed that Lenin 'treats the working class in the same way as a metallurgist works with iron ore'.²⁰ The theoretical classification of an individual wins the day even with the Christian Marxist Gutierrez, for whom not every poor worker is a proletarian. 'If he does not avow the dictatorship of the party he belongs on the dump-heap together with the bourgeoisie, because for Gutierrez only those are the poor who are already actively involved in the revolutionary *praxis*.'²¹ The real character of Marxist compassion is uncovered especially where the Marxist's watchword 'so much the worse is so much the better' artificially aggravates the situation of misery in order to incite a revolutionary mood in the masses. To demarxise compassion means to make it apolitical. Politicians

¹⁸ K. Marx, *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher - Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm, 16 June 2002).

¹⁹ Marx, *Capital I* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch25.htm, 16 June 2002).

²⁰ O. Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (London: Random House, 1996), p. 723.

²¹ Novak, *Will it Liberate?*, p. 148.

must move from the abstract interest in ‘masses’ to real interest in the individual regardless of his class and political affiliation.

Marxism promises a just world. ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it’²² is a famous saying of Marx declaring war against injustice. According to a textbook of Marxist philosophy, with Marxism ‘...the time arrived when philosophy came from heaven down to the earth’.²³ The Polish critic of Marxism, Jozef Tischner, has written that ‘Marxism is first of all a philosophy of human labour’²⁴ and that ‘it was born out of the revolt of human beings against the exploitation of human labour’.²⁵ The historical accuracy of these statements may be doubted. What is certain is that this is the way Marxism was viewed by the ‘working masses’. In this area Marxism has no competitor among the philosophical systems, and that gives it a kind of monopoly to lead the ‘working masses’. Human work gets really very exceptional attention here. Labour made humans out of an ape;²⁶ labour is the reason humans are different from animals; it is the source of their ability to speak and to create works of art. Labour is the only way to create value because value ‘is the labour of commodity makers embodied in the commodity’.²⁷ Labour in its ideal form (in future Communism) will be ‘not only a means of life but life’s prime want’.²⁸

With the fall of the Marxist future the worship of (physical) labour has fallen as well. The attitudes of residual Marxism have not changed, though, and people still consider physical work more valuable than mental work. Demarxification, therefore, has to put the rewards for physical work into reasonable relation to the rewards for mental work. This task is not enviable.

²² K. Marx, *Theses On Feuerbach* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm, 16 June 2002), Thesis XI.

²³ F.V. Konstantinov, ed., *Základy marxistickej filozofie* [Fundamentals of Marxist Philosophy] (Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1961), p. 94.

²⁴ J. Tischner, *Marxism and Christianity* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1987), p. 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.83.

²⁶ ‘...Labour is the source of all wealth, the political economists assert. And it really is the source – next to nature, which supplies it with the material that it converts into wealth. But it is even infinitely more than this. It is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself. (F. Engels, *The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*) (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1876/part-played-labour/index.htm, 16 June 2002).

²⁷ Collective: *Politická ekonómia*, p. 63.

²⁸ In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, ch. 1) (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm, 16 June 2002).

The problem is that an employee in a capitalist enterprise, according to Marxist theory, does not work for himself. His work is *alienated* from him for the sake of capital. In this way an eternal and irreconcilable enmity between employer and employee arises. One of the theologians of liberation, Enrique Dussel, asserts that any relationship between employer and employee is a form of idolatry.²⁹ According to Marxist philosophy, any compromise or legislative measure cannot solve this contradiction. If a Marxist attempts any such thing, he will get a terrible label (in his view) – a ‘revisionist’ who makes a ‘dead dogma’ out of a living theory of Marxism. The only way out is that the disinherited take things into their own hands and defeat the capitalists. ‘To be a Marxist ...is not to recoil even before a guillotine’.³⁰ ‘We have no compassion and we ask no compassion from you. When our turn comes, we shall not make excuses for the terror.’³¹ This fight is not something new, because ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles’ according to the opening words of the *Communist Manifesto*. In this way, out of great love for humankind a great hatred was born that was directed against concrete people.³² The state, which is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another,³³ is for a Marxist an object of perpetual hatred – until it is in the hands of the proletariat.

Marxism, therefore, is colossal hatred and a programme of fighting against the wealthy explained by ‘compassion’ for the impoverished and the miserable. Under residual Marxism this irreconcilable hatred against the state, the employers and the ruling parties (and all their politics) survives. If the builders of democracy do not succeed in persuading these ‘Marxists’ that the state is the common interest of all and the employer is not the irreconcilable class enemy of the employees, they must count on their boycotting of every economic and political programme as only another reactionary method to pacify the masses. ‘Politics is no longer regarded as an empirical, prudential argument concerning means and ends, in which every person sees at least a portion of the truth. It is regarded as a field within which one side must prevail and the other be destroyed.’³⁴

²⁹ Novak, *Will it Liberate?*, p. 52.

³⁰ E. Radzinskij, *Stalin* (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1998), p. 67.

³¹ K. Marx, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/quotes/index.htm, 16 June 2002).

³² Figs, *A People's Tragedy*, p. 209.

³³ ‘In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and at best an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worst sides the proletariat, just like the Commune, cannot avoid having to lop off at the earliest possible moment, until such time as a new generation, reared in new and free social conditions, will be able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap-heap.’ (K. Marx, *Civil War in France*, Engels’ postscript).

(www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/postscript.htm, 16 June 2002).

³⁴ Novak, *Will it Liberate?*, pp. 169-170.

The just revenge breeds the Marxist hope and so the Marxist struggle is being fought with the eschatological expectations of the arrival of the perfect classless society. This is a secular doctrine of salvation, promising it not in heaven but here on earth. It is 'good news' that the future belongs to those who are deprived now. That this is a parallel to Christianity there is little doubt. According to Marx, 'Christianity is the religion *kat exochen* and it is the essence of religion itself',³⁵ but this Christian religion has alienated humanity from itself and from nature. Marxist communism is the realisation of Christian ideals in their unalienated form. In the ideal society there will be no classes (private property has been abolished³⁶), there will be no need for money and there will be no borders between states because the communist revolution will win the world.

The glowing descriptions of the Marxist future have left some dangerous elements in residual Marxism. In the first place, there is the loss of an overall direction and meaning of life and work. A Marxist is an atheist so he does not cherish religious hopes and his party no longer guarantees the progress of society toward Communism. What can he do? To make money and become rich is still the result of exploitation – profit and capital are 'dirty words', but it is inevitable to adjust to reality – so he will possibly become an exploiter without scruples, because according to his former Marxist confession he cannot be otherwise. Demarxification must at least challenge these Marxist-capitalists not to consider their employees as their class enemies.

The realisation of the Marxist dream of a socialist state meant that the state that had been the main enemy became overnight the only source of justice, abundance and salvation. The differences between people were at least, on the surface, evened out,³⁷ and everything was leading to a communist future (when the state will not exist any longer). In this way the socialist state was the insurance that even malfunctioning socialism was, in the Marxist way, 'leading to communism'. Residual Marxism has this attitude in the form of strong statism, where the state is *both* the enemy *and* the only hope of a better future. The result is passivity in an individual because under socialism '...individual effort tends to fall to the level of the least productive; invention ceases, because it is not rewarded... entrepreneurial talent ...is repressed because it inevitably leads to differentiation and to inequalities.'³⁸ Passive waiting on the state's activity

³⁵ Christianity is the religion *kat' exochen*, the essence of religion, deified man under the form of a particular religion (Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, pp. 278-279) www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/ch02.htm, 16 June 2002).

³⁶ The Marxists took the statement 'property is theft' from Proudhon.

³⁷ ...Equality under socialism does not mean equal opportunity but equal resulting situation (Novak, *Will it Liberate?*, p 183).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

to do away with all social problems is a direct result of the Marxist divinisation of the state. Demarxification then means un-divinisation of the state and the building of the dignity of an individual along with practical steps to permit his initiative.

The absolute authority of scientifically discovered truth

The simplified and radiant Marxist theory was communicated with the almost unbeatable authority of science. Marxism was proudly called 'scientific socialism' or 'scientific communism'.

Marx claimed his philosophy was natural science³⁹ in an era when the success of natural sciences was producing raised expectations of a golden future for mankind. He wrote that 'where speculation ends — in real life — there real, positive science begins: the representation of practical activity, of the practical process of the development of men.'⁴⁰ This Marxist science of society draws its authority from the Hegelian *absolute* knowledge. For Hegel absolute knowledge is a result of the dialectical process and it is in the *self-consciousness* of the Absolute Spirit who is realising himself in humankind. Marx took this Hegelian *self-consciousness* of the Spirit and said that in reality it was the objective social consciousness of man⁴¹ and the dialectics of Hegel placed in the real processes of nature. In this way he got the mark of precision that natural sciences demand and the sure knowledge (authority) of the immediate consciousness of man — everything at one stroke. The Absolute Spirit of Hegel was changed into material laws and forces of nature and this renaming secured for his philosophy the divine authority in material form.

In reality Marxism does not tolerate empirical testing. 'All versions of Marxism have one thing in common — they are a strange mixture of science and prophecy. ...The scientific part of Marxist theory cannot be empirically tested — it consists in *a priori* premises that (by definition) cannot be refuted.'⁴² In complete agreement with this line, in 1927 the Soviet economist Strumilin declared: 'Our task is not to study economics, but to change it. We are bound by no laws. There is no fortress which Bolsheviks cannot storm.'⁴³ Demarxification may be helped by the general

³⁹ The social reality of nature, and human natural science, or the natural science of man, are identical terms (K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Private Property and Communism) (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/comm.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁴⁰ K. Marx, *German Ideology* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁴¹ Man is the world of man — state, society (K. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction) (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁴² Peter L. Berger, *Kapitalistická revoluce* (Bratislava: Archa, 1993), p. 8 (Translated from Czech).

⁴³ Harry and Bonaro Overstreet, *The Iron Curtain* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), p. 58.

failure of Marxist economic ‘science’, but the mystical materialist part of Marxism has not been touched. So people still talk about ‘stages of the evolution of society’ or about ‘culture being conditioned by economy’ without giving one thought to the question of whether these are not tricks played by residual Marxism.

In *historical materialism*⁴⁴ Marxism, with the assurance of a natural science, has discovered the saviour of humankind – the proletariat, because ‘...in the fully-formed proletariat, the abstraction of all humanity, even the semblance of humanity, is practically complete... When the proletariat is victorious... then the proletariat disappears as well as the opposite which determines it, private property.’⁴⁵ To be on the side of the proletariat means to be on the side of science and the ultimate force of history. But the definition of proletariat says ‘...the proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labour and does not draw profit from any kind of capital’.⁴⁶ This is why in Marxism truth always has a ‘class nature’. On the one hand, to accuse some theory of having a ‘bourgeois origin’ is serious enough to refute it. On the other hand, what is true for the proletariat is always the norm for objective truth because ‘...only the proletariat, with the help of revolutionary intellectuals, can see the world in the proper perspective’.⁴⁷ (Proletarian logic is an expression of pure and simple logic that does not suffer from partial bias.) From that it follows that nobody, except Marxists, are able to critique the social system because everybody’s thinking is determined by his/her class. At the same time, Marxists are never obliged to answer the arguments of those who oppose them – it is enough to attack their class (and personality). Demarxification must lead people to understand that the status of ‘exploited’ does not at the same time mean ‘privileged truth-owner’.

Morality according to Marxism is of a class nature as well. For ‘the proletarian is without property ...Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.’⁴⁸ Ethics is identified with politics because the highest ethical goal is the political goal of abolition of the exploitation of man by man. In this sense Lenin said, ‘...that behaviour is moral which hastens the

⁴⁴ Lenin said, that ‘Marx’s historical materialism was one of the greatest achievements of scientific thought’ (*Three Sources & Three Component parts of Marxism*, in 1913 – see www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/mar/x01.htm, 16 June 2002) but he was quoted in F. V. Konstantinov, ed., *Základy marxistické filozofie*, p. 347, as having said ‘Historical materialism is the greatest achievement of scientific thought’ (p. 347).

⁴⁵ K. Marx, F. Engels, *The Holy Family* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/ch04.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁴⁶ F. Engels, *Principles of Communism* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/11/prin-com.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁴⁷ R. Freedman, *The Marxist System* (Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, 1990), p. 73.

⁴⁸ Marx, Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 25.

victory of socialism'.⁴⁹ Any alliance is ethical if it serves this goal but the same alliance ceases to be ethical if it stops serving the goal. Marxist ethics lack personal conscience: that is replaced by the 'party line'. Partiality, condemned in any other ethical theory, becomes the basic requirement of truthfulness! From all of this, residual Marxism has kept politics devoid of ethical values – *justified by the theory*. If the success of a policy is simultaneously the highest ethical goal, it is necessary to subordinate everything else to it and that without any qualms of conscience.

Says Marx: 'It is only in the order of things in which there are no more classes and class antagonisms that social evolutions will cease to be political revolutions. Till then... the last word of social science will always be: *Le combat ou la mort*...(fight or death).'⁵⁰ And says Engels, 'A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon.'⁵¹ Further, according to Lenin: 'They imagine that the grave political questions can be solved by voting! In reality when these questions become crucial they are decided by civil war.'⁵² This is why residual Marxism still believes in violence and uses voting only from the position of weakness. Demarxification must put the ability to reach agreement in controversy on a firm philosophical foothold. Otherwise political discussion will be constantly endangered by social Darwinism where survival of one means the extinction of the other.

Because the revolution of the proletariat was somewhat slow in coming and the conditions of working men even began to improve, Lenin produced the doctrine that the social-democratic consciousness must be imparted to workers by a Marxist party from the outside. At the same time '...the party of the proletariat must win away from the bourgeoisie the small proprietors who are duped by them, and the millions of working people who enjoy more or less petty-bourgeois conditions of life'.⁵³ This party of Lenin is ruled by what he called democratic centralism, which in theory means that democratically reached decisions are implemented from the centre and allow no further opposition. In reality it amounts to a prohibition of factions because '...whoever brings about even the slightest weakening of the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship), is actually aiding the bourgeoisie against the

⁴⁹ Tischner, *Marxism and Christianity*, p. 84.

⁵⁰ K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, ch. 2 (1847), (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02e.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁵¹ F. Engels, *On Authority* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02e.htm, 16 June 2002).

⁵² V.I. Lenin, *The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/dec/16.htm, 12 November 2002).

⁵³ V I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/pref02.htm, 12 November 2002).

proletariat'.⁵⁴ By banning factions Lenin got rid of discussion within the party and Stalin made it into the infallible guardian of the sacred teaching of Marxism-Leninism. 'The word *party* had received an almost mystical sound. To lose the party membership card was a grave transgression and to doubt its truth was a crime.'⁵⁵ At the request of the party you had to affirm that black is white and white is black.⁵⁶ The Party was the supreme dispenser of rewards and punishments, the Party controls thinking and morality of its members. Reporting and exposure become not only a means of self-preservation but also a means of correction of the exposed. In residual Marxism this attitude of docile submission is transferred to any party that has the trust of a mind cast in the Marxist mould. Demarxification must demystify the term 'political party' and put the morality, conscience and common sense of an individual above the anonymous 'party line'.

The process of authority concentration from the proletariat to the Party continues with the exaltation of the Leader. According to Trotsky, 'Party organization takes the place of the Party; the Central Committee of the Party takes the place of the Party organization and, finally, the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee.' And really, 'to be a Bolshevik meant to take an oath of allegiance to Lenin'⁵⁷ and later to Stalin. H. Arendt has called the totalitarian authority the 'leadership principle', a principle that is realised in structures purposefully kept indistinct where finally the 'leader's will' decides.⁵⁸ This also involves organising a front of sympathizers who are not members of the party. This avoids the exact definition of lines between members and non-members. Totality is always interested in 'movement',⁵⁹ in a constant struggle that, according to Stalin, even sharpens after the victory of the proletariat.

In post-communist countries various 'charismatic' leaders are thriving because they fulfil the ideals of residual Marxism and they portray themselves as 'teachers', 'father of the nation', 'great strategist' etc. Demarxification of total trust in such leaders can probably only occur through building independent critical thinking because direct attacks on

⁵⁴ V.I. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*

(www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/apr/lwc/ch05.htm, 12 November 2002).

⁵⁵ L. Pachman, *Boha nelze vyhnat* (God cannot be expelled) (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1990), p. 31.

⁵⁶ '...the Party is to be cast as the benign and single producer and distributor of abundance. There is to be no other source to which people can turn for goods and services...' (Overstreet, *The Iron Curtain*, p. 88). Everything was ascribed to the merit of the Communist Party – baking of bread, building of roads, houses and factories, the crops of the fields as well as the abundance of water. Was not all of this the work of the Party?

⁵⁷ Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, p. 391.

⁵⁸ H. Arendtová, *Původ totalitarismu* [The Origin of Totalitarianism] (Praha: Oikúmené, 1996), pp. 502-3. In a totalitarian party each official is an embodiment of the leader, p. 514.

⁵⁹ Totalitarian movement can keep power only as long as everything around it keeps in movement. (Ibid., p. 430).

such leaders only strengthen their position. The alternative to totalitarianism was very well put by Ortega y Gasset: 'Liberalism is a legal and political principle, according to which the public power – although it is all-powerful – makes limits for itself.'⁶⁰

Dangerous vacuum

It would be absurd to think that all the problems of Eastern Europe are consequences of the Communist experiment (as is often simplistically maintained). But not to take seriously those ideas which were sown by it is to ignore a (maybe implicit) worldview of a large part of the population. Peter Berger, in connection with the failure of the socialist experiment, warns that no idea can ever be definitively and finally discredited. Also he says that 'capitalism is an inevitable but not sufficient condition of democracy'.⁶¹ In the new ideological vacuum under the influence of residual Marxism, democracy is being built in the mood and attitudes of Marxism! To carry out demarxification it is not enough to uncover the Stalinist Gulag or Djilas' 'new class'. It is necessary to show that the theory is already wrong in its ideal Marxist or Leninist form(ulation). Residual Marxism can explain all tragic deviation as aberration and remain faithful to the basic Marxist catechism about progress by class struggle.

One thing must be added. In the western democracies some elements that were part of Marxism are quite popular (e.g. evolutionism, materialism, populism, egalitarianism, statism) as part of the western worldview. Using this worldview in Eastern Europe is an insufficient alternative to Marxism. So before we invoke help from the West, we have to be aware of this and realise that if Eastern Europe inculcates this worldview it can even aggravate some of the problems present in residual Marxism.

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⁶⁰ J. Ortegay Gasset, *Vzbura davov* [The Rebellion of the Masses] (Bratislava: Remedium, 1994), p. 95.

⁶¹ Berger, *Kapitalistická revoluce*, p. 234.

In Search of the Bogeyman

A Response to Pavel Hanes

Pavel Hanes draws attention in his article to something of great importance in contemporary eastern and central European life. It is now almost nineteen years since the Communist regimes of the region began to tumble, and there have been many changes. Yet, in most of the countries there has still not been a real attempt to come to terms with the past in a way which permits the overcoming of its effects. Hanes speaks of the need for 'demarxification', analogously to the 'denazification' process which occurred in Germany after the Second World War. The fact that it took a good twenty years for this process to happen at anything other than a superficial level in Germany perhaps indicates that its time may be coming in eastern and central Europe.

My response to Hanes' article should, rightly, begin with an indication of the many areas of agreement. For the time being, I wish to avoid using the word 'Marxism', but I would certainly agree that there is a residual element of the preceding political system and that this feature is a contributory factor to some of the political and social problems which the former Communist countries are currently encountering. Until this issue is faced and dealt with, it seems to me that the situation will remain problematic.

Among the features are the ways in which people relate to politicians. There is, as Hanes points out, the paradox that the state is treated as 'both enemy and only hope of a better future'. This utterly ambivalent attitude towards the state and the politicians who form its most visible apparatus leads to permanent dissatisfaction with the political situation for most of the population, allied to a strong dependence on the state to supply all that people need. As Hanes also notes, part of the problem is that on the whole political parties do not see the need for their politics to be based on ethical values. Certainly in the Czech Republic that is very clear, including, it must be said, the Christian Democratic Party, and even the Green Party.

It is also a feature of central and eastern European countries, as Hanes rightly argues, that many of the leading business people are former Communists, who are inclined to treat their workers at least as badly as the most unreconstructed nineteenth-century factory owner. This is linked to the absence of any objective ethical stance, another point which Hanes draws attention to. It also explains why the former Communists are often either themselves leading rightwing politicians or support the rightwing

politicians where they do not have power themselves. Again, in the Czech Republic there is little of substance to distinguish the former Prime Minister and current President Vaclav Klaus from one of the country's former Communist leaders, and many Communists support Klaus' nationalist anti-Europeanism.

So far, I have outlined the places where I am in agreement with Hanes' article, and I hope that this indicates that in fact, substantially, I do accept both his argument and more importantly the call he makes for the 'demarxification' of society, even though this is a much more complex process than he would appear to think. Nevertheless, there are also areas where I disagree with the article, and it is to these that I now turn.

The first is perhaps a terminological issue, but it is important for the sake of clarity. At the beginning of his essay, Hanes suggests that he is precisely talking about Marxism-Leninism, and its residual effects on society. However, elsewhere in the document he somewhat randomly refers to Marxism, Marx and Communism in ways which appear to be approximately synonymous. It seems to me rather to beg the question, for one of the points at stake in this debate is whether the four (Marxism-Leninism, Marxism, Karl Marx and Communism) are indeed synonymous. In order to eradicate a problem, it is important to be able to state clearly and accurately what the problem is. At least in those central and eastern European countries which fell under the influence of the Soviet Union after the Second World War, I feel the most accurate description is that what is present is a Stalinist re-working of the Marxist-Leninist position to an official state-sponsored ideology of the 'scientific' Marxism.¹ Already here, though, one would have to ask questions about which elements of this position derive from Marx, which from the socialist or Communist interpretation of him, and which from some form of Russian autocratic monarchism.

This may seem rather pedantic, but it is fundamental, since really what is at stake is not Marxism as such, which, as I shall suggest shortly, is not a unitary concept, but particular ways in which Marxist-inspired positions were imposed and lived out. Slavic forms of Marxism are not identical to other forms of Marxism, so the question arises as to what is a result of the socio-political and economic impacts of the Marxist-Leninist system and what is a result of already existing worldviews. One may reasonably imagine, as Hanes himself admits, that it is too reductionist to blame all the evils of current central and eastern European states on

¹ Parush R. Parushev, 'Marxism and Christianity', an entry in the revised Tom Noble et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Nottingham, England/Downers Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008, forthcoming). I am very grateful to Dr Parushev for his helpful comments on the first draft of this response.

Marxism-Leninism. But, if that is true, what is needed is not just a 'demarxification'.

A second brief point, which to some extent follows from the previous one, is how to introduce the process of 'demarxification' without introducing some other form of totality. Hanes says, rightly, that the process will mean convincing people 'that reality is not black and white and an opposite point of view is always worth attention'. I think it remains an open and fair question as to whether Marxism-Leninism as implemented in the Communist regimes of eastern and central Europe has any legitimacy today as an alternative point of view. In the same way that many countries forbid the dissemination of Hitler's ideas, one could argue that the Marxist-Leninist system lost all claims to validity through the actions and crimes it gave rise to. On the other hand, as I tried to indicate above, this does not necessarily mean that Marxism, or the writings of Karl Marx are similarly to be discounted or outlawed. In other words, the complexity of reality may necessitate giving space to views we strongly disagree with.

Thirdly, I return to the question of how unitary Marxism is. This is not so much to do with the different forms of expression of Marxism listed above, but whether Marx actually produced such an all-encompassing system as Hanes claimed, and whether it is really quite so simple. Hanes' position is one which is echoed, among others, by the Roman Catholic Church's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), which issued a statement in 1984 on the possible dangers of liberation theology.² Like much of what the CDF produces, this is a fairly unsatisfactory document for several reasons. One of these is its claim that to utilise Marxist social analysis is to accept all of Marx including the atheist implications of dialectical materialism. In other words, either one takes the whole of Marx and his followers, or one takes nothing. The reason given for this assertion is that the system is so tightly bound together that it is simply impossible to split off one segment from the whole. I suppose the image is a sort of DNA one – the DNA of Marxism is to be found in each individual part of it, and you will always clone the whole if you use a part.

To be fair to the CDF, some Marxists have argued similarly.³ However, it is by no means clear that this is the case. As a matter of observable fact, it seems to me that there are many people who have made use of Marx, one of the masters of suspicion, as Paul Ricoeur has called him, in terms of the critical analysis of society which he offers, without

² Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 'Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"', available online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html. See especially Section VII.6.

³ Denys Turner, 'Religion: Illusions and liberation', in Terrell Carver, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 320-337 points this out, p. 334.

buying in to everything else. Among such people, one might mention the late Pope John Paul II in some of his social encyclicals. It may be important not to allow Marx more than he needs. Admittedly, Marx does have a fairly reductionist view which seeks to be explanatory of everything. But it is possible that Marx is wrong in some elements without being wrong in all.⁴ As the popular English expression has it, one does not have to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

A final point concerns Hanes' (mis-)understanding of liberation theology, which simply cannot be allowed to go unchallenged, even though it is not at the centre of his argument. First of all, Hanes' reading of liberation theology seems to depend entirely on Michael Novak, which is akin to relying on Attila the Hun for instructions on non-violent peacemaking. Novak has made a living out of defending the capitalist system as it is present in the United States of America, as a kind of realisation of the Hegelian Absolute Spirit. To say that a Marxist 'atheist system has won the hearts of many (think of Liberation Theology!)' is so far from being true in the case of liberation theology as to be almost actionable. Liberation Theology is not without its faults, but only a very limited Euro-centric view could ever even imagine it was tainted by atheism. This is really deeply insulting to the theologians, to the poor believers of Latin America and to the hundreds, probably thousands of martyrs of the past thirty or forty years. It is similarly bizarre to see one of the founding figures of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, described as a Christian Marxist.

My problem with this is not simply whether this is an accurate description of liberation theology (I would strongly argue it is not). Rather, it is indicative of the very need for 'demarxification' which Pavel Hanes is arguing for. This damning of all those who disagree with a particular interpretation of reality is surely absolutely paradigmatic for the Stalinist Marxist-Leninist system or any other form of totalitarianism. Something similar is seen when Hanes cautions against accepting too much from the West, since this has been tainted by Marxism too. As he includes the idea of egalitarianism under this, which as a political concept goes back at least to the French Revolution, one may doubt the accuracy of this claim,

⁴ For a brief Christian engagement with the positive elements of Marxism as an intellectual critical tradition, see Parushev, 'Marxism and Christianity', and for a more detailed analysis, cf. Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today* (New York: Crossroad, 1995). From a liberation perspective, see Clodovis Boff, 'Epistemología y Método de la Teología de la Liberación', in Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis*, Vol. 1 (San Salvador: UCA, 1991) (2nd edition), pp. 79-113, here p. 106, and in the same collection the essay by Enrique Dussel, 'Teología de la Liberación y Marxismo', pp. 115-144.

anyway. But it is just damning a whole system without any serious engagement with it, as Communists routinely disparaged ‘the bourgeois’.

To sum up. I agree fully with Pavel Hanes that societies in central and eastern Europe need to face up to the deleterious effects of their former systems on their current social and political life. But this needs to be done in a consistent and coherent way, which cannot include using the tools of the Stalinist Marxist-Leninist system for the purpose of ‘demarxification’. Thus, there remains a need to discover just how this can be done. As Christians, we can certainly bring the power of the gospel to bear on the question, although we must recognise that this must be done in a way that is not construed as another, or earlier form of totalitarianism.⁵ Transformation is possible, but, if it is not to repeat the same errors as were present before, it must be liberating and humble, seeking to sow harmony and love.

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⁵ We must acknowledge that there have been forms of Christianity, or more precisely, of Christendom, that have themselves been quite as destructively totalitarian as more modern forms of government. These forms of Christendom have left their traces in many of the countries that came under Soviet influence, and there is perhaps also a need for the vestiges of Christendom to be removed, too.

The Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews from *Shoah*:¹

Part 1: Redemptive Memories and Public Actions

Introduction

Not so long ago a national Bulgarian newspaper, *24 Chasa*, reported on a visit to Washington, D.C. of the country's Foreign Minister at that time, Solomon Passi. For one of his meetings with the U.S. administration, he happened to be in the Senate. After a series of conversations, during one of the breaks, Passi decided to look for his colleague Liebermann. The organisers of Passi's visit advised him to look for him at a conference of U.S. Orthodox rabbis that was taking place in the Senate. After entering the hall, Passi was surprised to find that he was the only one without a black hat and a long beard among those present. The eyes of all were turned to him, and a whisper of surprise at the presence of a young stranger spread among the rabbis. One of the conference leaders approached him uneasily and said, 'You have 60 seconds to tell them something of importance'. Passi came to the podium and said:

Shalom. I am Solomon Passi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria. As you know, this country is known for its respect for the Jews. It is also known for the fact that it saved [all of her] 50,000 Jews from genocide during the Second World War. Moreover, Bulgaria has not only respected and saved its Jews, but elects them as Ministers of Foreign Affairs.²

Coincidentally, on the same page of the newspaper another report appeared stating that in Tel Aviv a group of high-ranking clerics of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church had been invited to participate in a special ceremony proclaiming the late Exarch Stefan and the Patriarch Kyril as *Goiim Tsadikim*, the Righteous Gentiles. The mass media of Israel had been writing extensively about these two Bulgarian spiritual leaders and their personal involvement, as well as the whole country's attitude, in rescuing Bulgarian Jews in the Second World War (WWII). The city

¹ The paper is in honour of the Bulgarian people and is written for the 65th anniversary of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews from deportation to the Nazi concentration camps. The term *Shoah* (in Hebrew, 'destruction' or 'catastrophe'; Isaiah 47:11) is used to designate the destruction of European Jewry during WWII by the Nazi's carefully devised *Endlösung der Judenfrage*. It is a better substitute for the word 'holocaust' (in Greek, *holokaustos* 'burnt whole' as a translation for Hebrew *olah*—'burnt offering'), referring to the sacrifice in liturgical practices prescribed by the *Tanakh*, in which the offering is completely burnt. The term 'holocaust' was first applied by Elie Wiesel in relation again to the Nazi extermination of European Jewry. According to the majority Jewish understanding, describing the Nazis' grossest atrocious acts as the burning of millions of innocent lives on the altar of Fascist ideology is troubling if not sinister.

² Georgi Milkov, 'Passi pravi Show s 300 Ravina v USA' ('Passi Has a Show with 300 Rabbis in the USA'), *24 Chasa* 11, No. 72 (March 14, 2002), p. 33.

council of Jerusalem decided to name two city streets after Kyril and Stefan.³

This information caused my memory to return to 1994. After the publication of the first edition of David P. Gushee's book,⁴ I was approached by Glen Stassen with a simple question: 'How did it happen that while in Europe only a few dared to stand up for the Jews, the Bulgarian people saved all of their Jews from the Holocaust?' I answered spontaneously: 'Because of the strong presence and activity of the Communist party'. My answer was a gut-reaction response in that it was only partly true, if at all. It was much more an entrenched ideological construction than a historical truth. As most Bulgarians of my age, I am a product of my time, and my thinking was formed following the ideological clichés of socialist propaganda.

There is another revealing moment in this little story. At that time, and I can say for myself even much later, neither Glen nor I were concerned with the other big minority ethnic group targeted by the Nazis for annihilation—the Roma or Gypsies.⁵ Both of us had been aware that this was the second largest minority group to suffer the Nazi extermination but it did not dawn on us to compare their fate in Bulgaria during WWII with that of the Jews. Were they rescued as well? It is not the purpose of this research to go into a detailed answer to this question, but it is instructive to consider the results of a very recent body of research mapping Eastern European Roma memories in regard to the extermination and trying to assess the validity of these memories as Bakhtin's *chronotope*⁶ of modern Roma identity as the *Shoah* has been for the Jews.⁷

³ Kapka Todorova, 'Vladitsi osvetiha Missijata Ni v Izrael' ('The Archbishops Consecrated the Embassy Premises in Israel'), *24 Chasa* 11, No. 72 (March 14, 2002), p. 33.

⁴ David P. Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust: A Christian Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

⁵ Through the centuries Roma people in Europe were treated no less harshly by the Christian majority than the Jews. For a short list of major events of Roma persecution, see B.A. Robinson, 'The Religion and Culture of the Roma', published by Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance (Originally written in July 1998, available from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/roma.htm>; accessed June 2006). Cf. Nicolas Saul and Susan Tebbutt, eds., *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies' / Romanies in European Cultures* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004).

⁶ Mikhail M. Bakhtin introduced the concept of *chronotope* in literary theory to represent 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'. (See Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward Historical Poetics', in Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 84). Tzvetan Todorov is in debt to Bakhtin's insights for his inquiry into the interconnectedness of the competing memories of the rescuing of the Bulgarian Jews in his *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust*, a collection of texts with commentary, trans. from French by Arthur Denner (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, U.K.: Princeton University Press, 2001), originally published in French by Albin Michel in 1999), pp. 14-40.

⁷ On the 'Holocaust Cult' as a master story for contemporary Jewish identity, see Michael Goldberg's analysis in *Why Should Jews Survive: Looking Past the Holocaust Toward a Jewish Future* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), chap. 3.

Polish researcher Slawomir Kapralski has investigated possible signifiers of ethno-genesis (and particularly the extent to which ‘the narrative of the Holocaust’⁸ memory was one of them) in a conscious attempt to create a Europe-wide Roma identity, allowing for the status of a non-territorial ethnic-national minority, very similar to the Jews. While the project did confirm that it may be a workable proposal for Roma in Central Europe, Romania, and even Serbia who identify with the general narrative of the Holocaust—as symbolised particularly by the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, a ‘tradition based on such memory, narrative, and symbol must be—to a large extent—“invented”’ no less because of ‘lack of identification ... by some Roma groups’,⁹ and more specifically the Bulgarian Roma.

[F]or Bulgarian Roma, the Holocaust does not seem to be, generally speaking, an event that could create a message powerful enough to unite the Roma around its meaning. Although there is a genuine interest in history among mid-rank activists, it is difficult to imagine the memory of the Holocaust as a spontaneous identity-building factor because it is not rooted in [their] primal memories.¹⁰

In spite of their lower social status,¹¹ ‘None of the [Bulgarian] respondents had any personal experience, such as family histories related to the [Holocaust] period of the Second World War’.¹² They, as the Bulgarian Jews, were spared the death camps of *Shoah* by their compatriots. Interestingly, while there are and have been quarters of the cities intensely populated by Jews or Roma, ghettos are unknown in Bulgaria. In 1963 Hannah Arendt was reflecting with some puzzlement that while the Red Army was nearing the Bulgarian borders, ‘not a single Bulgarian Jew had died an unnatural death ... I know of no attempt to explain the conduct of the Bulgarian people, which is unique in the belt of mixed populations’.¹³

⁸ ‘Ritual of Memory in Constructing the Modern Identity of Eastern European Romanies’, in Tebbutt, *The Role of the Romanies*, p. 208 (pp. 208-25).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 216.

¹¹ Arguing the case for protection of the Jews against the clauses of the Law for the Defence of the Nation, former governmental minister Dimo Kazasov wrote (November 18, 1940) that the law relegated the Jews ‘to a moral status lower than that of the Gypsies’ (Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 61).

¹² Ibid., 214. The Nazis persecuted the Roma under the same ‘Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour’ as the Jews. A similar decree, ‘The Struggle against the Gypsy Plague’, was issued by Heinrich Himmler in 1937 and during the *Shoah*, they were equally declared to be ‘subhumans’. ‘In 1941... the Einsatzkommandos were instructed to “kill all Jews, Gypsies and mental patients”’. A few months later, Himmler ordered that all Roma be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau for extermination. Sybil Milton, a former Senior Historian of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum estimates that 500,000 Roma and Sinti persons were exterminated. This number is supported by the *Romas and Sinti Centre* in Heidelberg’ (Robinson, ‘The Religion and Culture of the Roma’).

¹³ ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem’, in Alexander Foll, comp. and ed., *Bulgari i Evrei* (Bulgarians and the Jews, in Bulgarian with summaries in English), in two parts (Sofia: Tangra TanHakPa, 2000), part 1, pp. 108-15; cf. her *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

Since the first edition of Arendt's book four decades ago, the world has witnessed an increasing flow of books, archival documents, personal memoirs, and historical research on the Bulgarians and the *Shoah*.¹⁴ Unlike my simplistic propaganda explanation, we are in a position today to account much better for the complex picture of salvific actions with deep roots in the Bulgarian religious culture and identity¹⁵ and the fuller story is yet to be told.

Elsewhere I have argued that attempts to address the phenomenon of rescuing Bulgarian Jews from the *Shoah* from the perspective of heroic benevolence, while bringing some partially true insights, are deficient.¹⁶ Focusing on the fragments comes at the expense of the holistic picture of communal involvement in rescuing the endangered. On the basis of primary materials of the time I will inquire in this paper into the motivations behind the active involvement of Bulgarian religious leaders, public figures and common people in actions of protest against the deportation. I will argue that a proper perspective on Bulgarians rescuing their fellow Jewish (and Roma) citizens has to take into account the strong formative influence of the Bulgarian Revival. The behaviour of these various groups of people can be understood as a lived-out vision of a free,

Cf. Harry Nissimov, *Sas Nokti i Zabi* (By the Skin of Our Teeth,) (Sofia: Kolumbia, 1995, in Bulgarian), p. 84.

¹⁴ I will list here only the most important for my current research: Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews* (Holbrook, MSS: Adams Media Corporation, 1998); Hristo Boyadzhiev, *Spasiavaneto na Balgarskite Evrei prez Vtorata Svetovna Voina* (The Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews in World War II) (Sofia: St. Kliment of Ohrid Sofia University Press, 1991, in Bulgarian and English); Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution 1940-1944* (Pittsburgh, PN: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972); David Cohen, comp., *Otseljavaneto: Sbornik ot Documenty 1940-1944* (The Survival: A Compilation of Documents 1940-1944) (Sofia: 'Shalom', 1995); Foll, ed., *Bulgari i Evrei*; Stephane Groueff, *Crown of Thorns: The Reign of King Boris III of Bulgaria, 1918-1943* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1998, in Bulgarian and English); Guy Haskell, *From Sofia to Jaffa* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); Ljubomir Lulchev, *Taynite na Dvortsovia Zivot: Dnevnik 1938-1944* (The Secrets of the Royal Life: A Diary 1938-1944) (Sofia: Veselie, 1992, in Bulgarian); Nissimov, *Sas Nokti i Zabi*; Gabriele Nissim, *The Man Who Stopped Hitler: The Life Story of Dimitar Peshev Who Saved the Jews of One Nation* (Sofia: National Assembly of Republic of Bulgaria, 1999, in Bulgarian and Italian); Todorov, *Fragility of Goodness*. For an additional list of published and archival material, see Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, pp. 51-6.

¹⁵ Tolerance as a traditional Bulgarian communal virtue in the particularly troubled region of the Balkans has been re-confirmed in spite of the drastic economic and cultural changes during the last two decades. See, e.g. Yantsislav Yanakiev, 'Public Perception on Inter-Ethnic Relations in Bulgaria', in Nikolai Genov, ed., *Ethnic Relations in South Eastern Europe: Problems of Social Inclusion and Exclusion* (Münster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2004), pp. 47-65 (but compare the rise of anti-Roma feelings in the same report). Cf. Bernard Newman, *Balkan Background* (London: Robert Hale, 1944), pp. 33-81, Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: Vintage Departures Edition, 1994) and Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 804-1999* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001).

¹⁶ Parush R. Parushev, 'Walking in the Dawn of the Light: On Salvation Ethics of the Ecclesial Communities in Orthodox Tradition from a Radical Reformation Perspective', PhD dissertation (Fuller Theological Seminary, California, USA, 2007), available through ProQuest, UMI No. 3260231, Chapter Nine.

pure and holy people.¹⁷ It is a narrative reiteration¹⁸ of the memories of the Bulgarian Exodus (freedom from Turkish oppression) as an embodiment of the salvific vision of the Revival.

Bulgarian People and their vision

In the concluding paragraphs of his succinct retelling of Bulgaria's long story, British historian R. J. Crampton writes:

Bulgaria's past contains nothing to compare with the horrors of the final solution. The saving of the Jews from Bulgaria proper during the Second World War was an achievement of almost the entire nation in which the entire nation takes justifiable pride. In the past Bulgaria had also provided a safe refuge for Armenians threatened with persecution and worse in Turkey....¹⁹

While his intuition has led the historian to attribute Bulgarians' attitude to their Jewish compatriots rightfully to the formative influence of a long-standing cultural tradition, there is little analysis in the book backing up his significant insight. I will attempt now to provide the missing background for Crampton's perceptive statement looking at the actions and motivations behind them of the main actor in this 'salvation story'—the Bulgarian people.

Defining altruism during the *Shoah* in social and religious terms, the researchers found two patterns of ethical response to the need of others: an ethics of equity and an ethics of care similar to the traditional Jewish understanding of righteousness (*sedek*) and gratuitous love (*hesed*). They came to the conclusion that 'those who rescued the Jews had integrated the value of care (*hesed*), while those who did not were moved by the value of equity'. Care compelled actions and according to them 'it meant assuming

¹⁷ A metaphor used by the Bulgarian revivalist Vasil Levski to describe his vision of the Bulgarian social realities after gaining their freedom from Ottoman slavery. Asked whom Bulgarians should elect as King after overthrowing the Sultan's rule, Levski replied: 'No one. We are in search of a pure and holy republic.' Cf. Zahari Stoyanov, *Zapiski po Balgarskite Vastania (Memoirs on the Bulgarian Uprisings)* (Sofia: Klasika Publishers, 1996).

¹⁸ To define the theological presuppositions beneath the responses of different Bulgarian faith communities to the challenge of the Antisemitism in WWII, I will use a methodology based on the research in James Wm. McClendon, Jr. and James M. Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, revised and enlarged edition (Valley Forge, PN: Trinity Press International, 1994; originally published as *Understanding Religious Convictions* in 1975 by University of Notre Dame Press, USA) and in Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

¹⁹ R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, 2nd edition, Cambridge Concise Histories Series (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005; first published in 1997; reprinted 2000, 2003), p. 268. In the Armenian case the reference is to the Armenian genocide (or Armenian Holocaust) attempted by the government of the Young Turks in 1915-1917. On the similarity between the *Shoah* and the Armenian Genocide, see Robert Melson, 'On the Distinctiveness of the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide', in Alan L. Berger, *Bearing Witness to the Holocaust, 1939-1989* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 55-69.

personal responsibility, and people motivated by this value tended to have a universalist view of ethical obligation. They saw the Jews not simply as Jews but as human beings with the same rights as any other human being.²⁰ Can a similar pattern be detected in the individual and corporate behaviour of the Bulgarian populace?

Dimitar Peshev – a person with vision

Italian journalist and human rights activist Gabriele Nissim put forward the most attractive proposal for an ultimate rescuer of the Bulgarian Jews: that of the deputy speaker of the National Assembly and former justice minister Dimitar Peshev.²¹ With deep family roots in the democratic tradition of the Bulgarian revival, Peshev was a visionary.²² A highly respected politician, he was elected by the members of parliament as their deputy chairman for his independent judgments against the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Born in Kyustendil, one of the cities which was, at that time, most heavily populated with Jews in all of Bulgaria, Peshev grew up with them. As a lawyer and a politician, he 'was a good friend of the Jewish community in Bulgaria'.²³

His character and public standing had proven providential for the rescue of the Jews. In the dramatic moment of this critical time, 'he was the only one they [both the Jews and those who acted on their behalf] knew who possessed both the integrity and power to effectively intervene and make the government listen'.²⁴ And he did. Informed by his Jewish friend Jacob Baruch and by a delegation from his hometown about the impending deportation, he acted decisively and with determination. His actions brought to a stop the government's sinister project literally hours before it was to be executed.²⁵ At the very least his actions delayed the government's dealings with the Jews. A man of resolve, he did not stop there. He had all the grounds to believe that the deportations had only been suspended temporarily. He went on to collect the signatures of forty-three members of

²⁰ Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of Righteous Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, foreword by Harold M. Schulweis, afterword by Abraham H. Foxman (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc. in association with The Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers/ ADL New York, NY, 1993), p. 7. In the quotation, Paldiel is referring to the research of S. P. Oliner and F.M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988), ch. 8.

²¹ I will review the argument in his *The Man Who Stopped Hitler*. His account is backed up by Hari Nissimov in *Sas Nokti i Zabi*.

²² He made his fame as justice minister by attempting a reform of Bulgarian marital laws and introducing civil marriage as normative and by objecting to the death penalty imposed on an influential political opponent of the ruling powers.

²³ Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, p. 115.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁵ According to Nissim, three to four hours before the scheduled time for the operation of the deportation in Kyustendil, *The Man Who Stopped Hitler*, p. 217; cf. Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, pp. 116-25.

parliament from the governing majority on a petition to the prime minister protesting the deportations and calling for their immediate cessation on moral grounds. Among other things, the petition reads:

[Deportation] would be a destructive measure, carrying grave political consequences. It would brand Bulgaria with an undeserved stain that not only would burden her morally, but also would void all her moral standing. Small nations cannot afford the freedom to ignore these [moral] arguments, which ... will always remain ... the strongest weapons in their hands...²⁶

In so doing he exposed the government's ill-intent to the wider public and forced the King out of passive compliance. Peshev set the ball rolling of public protests and non-violent actions of public disobedience which ultimately prevented Jewish deportation, with dire consequences to himself. He was sacked and expelled from the majority.²⁷

Apart from friendships and commitment to safeguarding justice and human rights for all, his heroic and sacrificial acts of defiance were motivated by his patriotic loyalties to the aspirations of Bulgaria's national Revival. Reflecting years later on the dramatic events unfolding during the spring of 1943, he writes in his memoirs: '[they] could have had tragic consequences for the Jews or at least for some of them, undoubtedly damaging Bulgaria's reputation forever ... and undermined the moral bulwarks of its national policy'.²⁸ A solitary hero—an enigmatic politician—contributed to the rescuing of the Jews against all the odds by paying the price of his political death.

Bulgarian people and their vision

While focused primarily on the story of the failed deportation, researchers of the rescue event are missing the point that the rescue of the Jews began much earlier with the public defiance of the Law for the Defence of the Nation (LDN).²⁹ The events surrounding the passing of LDN witnessed to the strong reaction against it by all segments of the Bulgarian population. This reaction is well documented³⁰ and attests to the most important

²⁶Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, p. 150. For the full text of the petition and the prime minister's immediate reaction, see Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, pp. 216-22.

²⁷ Cf. Nissim, *The Man Who Stopped Hitler*, pp. 225-49.

²⁸ Todorov, *Fragility of Goodness*, p. 156.

²⁹ The Law was crafted in the summer of 1940 in Germany under Nazi supervision 'as an almost exact duplication of the Nuremberg Laws' of September 15, 1935 and under the same racist premises (Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, pp. 27-8. Cf. Natan Grinberg, *Hitleristkijat Natisk za Unishtozhavane na Evreite v Balgaria (Hitlerism's Pressure for the Annihilation of Bulgaria's Jews)* (Tel-Aviv: Amal, 1961), p. 34; Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, pp. 12, 58).

³⁰ A representative collection is published by Cohen in *Otseljavaneto*. (An English translation of some of the most telling documents is available in Todorov, *Fragility of Goodness*.) It is complemented by some

ingredients of the motivation leading to the rescue of Bulgarian Jews. United public opinion considered this law 'anti-national and anti-constitutional'.³¹ The records of public reaction are the single most important source for the understanding of the public energy driving the successful rescue of Bulgarian Jews and I will turn to examine them now.

Reading through the collections of primary documents one cannot miss the recurrent motives of the Bulgarians' prime objection to the draconian legislative measures of the LDN. For them the measures were first and foremost unjustified: as Peshev writes, 'In the years prior to the Second World War, Bulgaria had no "Jewish question", strictly speaking'.³² Therefore measures or laws against the Jews were unjust. Ljubomir Lulchev summarised public opinion: 'even as the bill [the Law] was very unjust, but... at its adoption it was made extremely brutal, and could bring only harm'.³³

After the publication of the bill, some of the first to react against it in strong opposition were Bulgarian literary personalities. Their letter to the Prime Minister, signed by twenty-two of the country's most prominent poets and novelists, expresses, in summary form, the widely shared feelings of the Bulgarian populace. The letter is worth quoting at length.

We can infer from these statements that the bill's objective is to deprive a Bulgarian national minority of its civil rights. We are very surprised, and even embarrassed ... In our opinion, such a law will be very harmful to our people. Our legislature must not approve a law that will enslave one part of Bulgaria's citizens, and leave a black page in our modern history. Many times in the past, our people have been subject to persecution and humiliation. Our fathers still remember the shame of the foreign yoke. As our poet says, Bulgarian backs still bear 'the scars of the lash, the marks of long suffering ...' Should we then imitate these atrocities and follow a similar and dangerous road that will lead us to lose our place among the world's free and civilised peoples? We are not defending this or that national minority; our aim is rather to uphold our country's reputation ... [and not] tarnish our country's reputation and soil its traditions of religious tolerance and humanity, won at so great a cost.... [We] ask you to stop the

additional memoirs in Todorov's publication. The scope of primary documents is astounding. The collection includes records of short telegrams, leaflets, letters, speeches and statements, newspaper reports of public actions, minutes, diaries, memoirs, etc. from the opponents, the proponents, and the victims of the Law. When the document appears in Bulgarian and in English, I will refer to Todorov's translations where possible. I will also make use of private materials from the archives of the Ministry of the Interior.

³¹ Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, p. 58.

³² Ibid., p. 284; cf. Todorov, *Fragility of Goodness*, p. 137.

³³ *Otseljavaneto*, pp. 559, 168.

enactment of this law whose dire consequences will bring dishonour to our legislature and leave the saddest memories.³⁴

This document is a testimony to the nation's inspirations. It contains, in a nutshell, all the major motives of public defiance flowing from the nineteenth-century national Revival with its culmination in the April uprising of 1876 and in freedom from five centuries of Ottoman oppression. The vision, to which this document is a witness, was the thread that held together the statutes of the Turnovo Constitution. It was the founding document of the newly re-established Bulgarian Kingdom. The Constitution had incorporated the liberating spirit of the Bulgarian Revival and was one of the most democratic and tolerant constitutions of the time.³⁵ The Constituent Assembly incorporated in its midst representatives of minority communities, including Jews. Article 61 is particularly relevant to an understanding of the unfolding of the story of the Jewish saga. It states: 'No one can either buy or sell human beings. Regardless of gender, religion or nationality any slave becomes free at the moment they step on Bulgarian territory.'³⁶ The emphases on freedom and territory are crucial in the understanding of the motivations behind the actions of the rescuers and their helplessness and ineffectiveness in the administrated territories of Thrace and Macedonia.

It was precisely the faithfulness to this vision that motivated Peshev to act as he did. The language of this document is a striking blend of an almost biblical awareness of shame and honour (very much alive in the Bulgarian patriarchal culture of the time), plus an acute sense of continuity with the vision of the Revival and humanist commitment to civil rights, tolerance, liberty and human dignity for all.³⁷ There is clear evidence that, in the period of the Revival, as well as at the time of the struggle against Jewish deportation, it was the intelligentsia that embraced the same vision

³⁴ Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, pp. 106-8; cf. Todorov, *Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 45-6. 'The scars of the lash, the marks of long suffering' is a quotation from a poem of the 'national poet' of the Bulgarian Revival and classic of Bulgarian literature, Ivan Vazov (1850-1921).

³⁵ Ivan Bozhilov, Vera Mutafchieva, Konstantin Kosev, Andrej Pantev and Stojcho Grancharov, *Istoria na Bulgaria (History of Bulgaria)*, in Bulgarian (Sofia, Bulgaria: Hristo Botev Publishing House, 1993), pp. 412-5; Bobi Bobev, Todor Dakov, Hristo Matanov, *Kratak Spravochnik po Istoria na Balgaria (Short Handbook on Bulgarian History)*, in Bulgarian (Sofia, Bulgaria: Bulvest 2000, 1993), p. 284.

³⁶ My translation.

³⁷ Glen H. Stassen and others have argued persuasively for a strong link between the language of human rights and the biblical Kingdom language. E.g. see Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Vigen Guroian, 'Human Rights and Christian Ethics: An Orthodox Critique', *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, vol. 17 (1997): pp. 301-9. Cf. Michael L. Westmoreland-White, 'Setting the Records Straight: Christian Faith, Human Rights and the Enlightenment', *ibid.*, vol. 15 (1995), pp. 75-96 and Parushev, 'Walking in the Dawn of the Light', Part One.

and moved people to follow it.³⁸ Very much in line with the vision of the Radical Reformation, 'this'—what was happening in Bulgaria during the time of WWII—was 'that', which Bulgarians were living through in the time of striving for liberation from Ottoman domination.³⁹ As Gushee points out in his well-researched study, internalised biblical motives of the equality and preciousness of every human life as well as of compassion and love for the neighbour were major reasons for Jewish rescuers⁴⁰ and more generally of toleration of minorities.

The same concerns about injustice, humiliation and deprivation of a minority community of their rights are evident from the Statement issued by the Governing Board of the Bulgarian Lawyers' Union. This document also refers to the vision of the Revival and also goes on to say: 'Not only are these measures unjustified, they also contradict the free and democratic spirit of the Bulgarian people, who in all the long years of the Ottoman yoke and its miseries, misfortunes, and injustices, never considered the Jews their enemies or oppressors.' Considering particularly the situation in the Balkans, the lawyers recalled that 'there are Bulgarian minorities today who are living under foreign domination ... our struggle to defend these oppressed minorities will lose much of its judicial and moral foundation if we impose restrictions and arbitrary measures on a national minority here at home'.⁴¹ One will not miss in these lines the biblical language of the 'golden rule' of 'always treat others as you would like them to treat you' (Matt. 7:12, NEB) and the concern with moral authority. This motivation for rescuing Jewish fellow citizens came from the remembered experience of religious and ethnic persecutions and from the minority status of the Bulgarians themselves in the Ottoman Empire. Gushee discerns very similar reasons motivating the persecuted Huguenot minority in the French village of Le Chambon and the nearby Cévennes region to engage in active rescue of the persecuted Jews.⁴²

³⁸ Rumjana [Georgieva] Radkova, *Intelegentsijata i Nравstvenostta prez Vazrazhdanto [Intelligentsia and Morality during the [Bulgarian] Revival (XVIII-first half of XIX century)]* (Sofia, BG: 'Prof. Marin Drinov' Academic Publisher, 1995). For the primary importance of the religious inspiration in the Bulgarian Revival and the role of the spread of the biblical vision among Bulgarians in the nineteenth century, see James F. Clarke, *Biblijata i Balgarskoto Vazrazhdane [The Bible and the Bulgarian Revival]*, trans. by Hristo Danev (Sofia, BG: MaK, 2007), pp. 10-26.

³⁹ On the biblical hermeneutical perspective of the adherents of the Radical Reformation, see James Wm McClendon, Jr., 'The Baptist and Mennonite Vision' in *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation*, Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought Series, ed. Paul Toews (Winnipeg and Hillsboro: Kindred Press, 1993), pp. 211-24, and his *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Volume I*, rev. and enl. ed., 2002 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002; published posthumously; originally published in 1986), chapter one.

⁴⁰ Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles*, pp. 32-46.

⁴¹ Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, pp. 109-110; cf. Todorov, *Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 47-48.

⁴² Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles*, pp. 125-8.

An implicit proof for the visionary nature of this Bulgarian rescue of the Jews is the fact that their cause had found its best hearing among the immigrant militant nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, who played a crucial role in saving the Jews.⁴³ Nissimov writes: 'It is perhaps due to the similarity in national aspirations that the relationships between the Jews and the Macedonian Bulgarians were [so] friendly'.⁴⁴

Reflecting on the effect of Peshev's actions, Nissim observes:

On the Bulgarian scene suddenly emerged many other persons like Peshev, who had the courage to say 'no'. During those days there would barely have been a Jew, who did not know such a person. And even today the Jews in Israel, having come from Bulgaria, remember their old home-land through the story of some of their friends at the time.⁴⁵

The secret of rescuing Bulgaria's Jews is not in the special Judeophile qualities of the Bulgarian character. Historians are quick to point to the fact that there is no easily made answer as to why the Bulgarians saved their Jews.⁴⁶ At least the idealised Judeophile feelings or exaggerated tolerance of the Bulgarian people should be avoided in a search for the answers. There is plenty of evidence of traditional antagonism toward the 'others' of different faiths, and to the Jews specifically, embedded in folk mythology and prejudice.

The secret is in the friendship, the bond and the vision of belonging together to something bigger than an ethnic or a religious community. Researching the motives for rescuing Jews in occupied Europe, David Gushee points to personal ties and friendship with Jews prior to *Shoah* as having ultimate motivational force.⁴⁷ Following his historian's insights Bar-Zohar makes a revealing comment:

The Bulgarian intellectuals and political elite were even more tolerant [than the secular Jews]. Most of the intellectuals and statesmen embraced, with fervent devotion, the goal of making Bulgarian society one of the most enlightened in the world. They

⁴³ On the role of the Macedonian leader Vladimir Kurtev, a close friend of the Jews from Kyustendil, see Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, pp. 103-112; cf. Nissim, *The Man Who Stopped Hitler*, pp. 206-7; Chary, *Bulgarian Jews*, pp. 91-5; Groueff, *Crown of Thorns*, pp. 316-8. He was prepared to threaten even the Interior Minister Gabrovski with retaliation, if the Jews were deported (ibid., p. 121).

⁴⁴ Nissimov, *Sas Nokti i Zabi*, p. 95.

⁴⁵ Nissim, *The Man Who Stopped Hitler*, p. 243, translation mine.

⁴⁶ Vladimir Ivanov Paunovski, 'The Others', in Foll, *Bulgari i Evrei*, vol. 1, pp. 210-90; Pavel Stefanov, 'Bulgarians and Jews throughout History', in *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. XXII, No. 6 (December 2002), also available electronically from http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/stefanov_baj.html (accessed on April 15 2008); and Nissimov, *Sas Nokti i Zabi*, pp. 41-4.

⁴⁷ Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles*, pp. 105-7.

were extremely proud of their Constitution, which guaranteed absolute equality of minorities. They regarded its humane principles with very innocent, Bulgarian idealism, bordering on naïveté.⁴⁸

The result of my analyses so far can be summarised in the observation of Bulgarian-Jewish historian Vladimir Ivanov Paunovski—a renowned student of the relationships of Bulgarians and Jews—who writes: ‘It is safe to say that the democratic views of the Bulgarian revivalists, [of the nineteenth century] both enlightened intellectuals and revolutionaries, had been definitive for the establishing of good relationships between Bulgarians and the Jews’.⁴⁹ This conclusion leads to another question: If the common people have been faithful to the vision largely inspired by their spiritual leaders in the past, what was the position of the leadership of the Christian communities in the public confrontation with the Bulgarian pro-Nazi government,⁵⁰ particularly of the leadership of the State-sponsored Orthodox Church?⁵¹ This question turns the attention to the relationship of vision, theology and ethics, which I will consider in the second part of this paper, which will appear in the next issue of this Journal.

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⁴⁸ Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, pp. 261-2.

⁴⁹ Paunovski, ‘The Others’, pp. 212, 210-90. Paunovski is a Bulgarian historian and the chief editor of the *Annual of the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria ‘Shalom’* and B’nai B’rith ‘Carmel’, Sofia.

⁵⁰ Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, passim.

⁵¹ As may be expected, there is an abundance of materials documenting the robust position of the Central Consistory of the Jews in Bulgaria, of the Jewish community leadership, and of the Jewish Rabbinate acting on behalf of their people, e.g. Cohen, *Otseljavaneto*, documents Nos. 2, 6, 7, 9, 34, 37, 57, 131-2, 144; cf. Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp*, passim. I was not able to find materials related to the Bulgarian Muslim community and I will not address their position in this research.

Book Review

David Paul Parris

Reading the Bible with Giants: How 2000 Years of Biblical Interpretation Can Shed New Light on Old Texts

Paternoster Press, 302 pages. ISBN 978-1-84227-273-2

Next time you find yourself caught up in a debate between someone fighting for biblical literalism, someone fighting for traditional historical criticism, someone trying to open up discussion on Reader Response (and the many other forms of post-modern hermeneutics), leaving you wondering how on earth you can decide what the real meaning of a text or passage is, that is the time to curl up with Parris's 'Giants' and Reception Theory (RT), which emerged in Germany in the 1960s and is familiar territory in continental Europe though somewhat neglected in the English-speaking world.

RT makes a distinction between the meaning of a text (one of the goals of historical criticism) and the way in which it has been interpreted in the history of the church over 2000 years, thereby acknowledging the importance of critical scholarship whilst avoiding the pitfalls of Reader Response with its focus on how we read it today, and recognising the value of learning to read in the light of those who have gone before. Hermeneutics thus becomes a three-way process: the text (the tree trunk), all previous interpretations (the branches) and the reader, all different and with varying degrees of productivity and attractiveness. It is not for Parris a new fad or the latest panacea and it is still only one tool among many but one which he believes has been much neglected, needs pulling out of the cupboard and dusting up, which is what he does.

Examples abound, from the allegorical methods of the Early Church Fathers, to the more spiritual and mystical interpretations of the monastics in the Middle Ages, followed by the changes that came with the Reformation and the Enlightenment, modern scholarship and Post-modernism, including Jonah, the Sermon on the Mount, John 8 and Romans 7. The object is not to offer new interpretations but to help us to explore the text for ourselves and to evaluate our findings not only in discussion with our contemporaries but also with our predecessors who even now may still have fresh light to throw on our situations.

The author has the teacher's heart and skills and there is plenty of good plain common sense, such as the reminder that applying 'the right method' (whatever that is) does not necessarily lead to the right result. Preachers and Bible Study leaders will find much to learn and reflect on as well as being stimulated by much of the detail.

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